

EXCEEDS

Name: Emily Feustel
 Final Grade: 4/1 A

SPED S16
 Early Childhood Program Observation and Teacher Interview

Components inclusive preschool program	Comments
<p>A. <u>Teacher Interview (semi-structured) to gather information about</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ program philosophy, values which are foundational to the program ➤ the teacher's perspective on inclusion of children with disabilities (the benefits and challenges to inclusion in their program) ➤ description of the children in class/program (ages, disabilities represented) ➤ the program's capacity to implement IEP/IFSP (See Appendix H, P. 465) ➤ curriculum and strategies utilized to support child development (communication, motor, social, self help, cognition and literacy) ➤ the types of assessment utilized in program to inform instruction ➤ how family members are involved in assessments ➤ team practices utilized in program (i.e., transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary) ➤ procedures used for transition planning procedures used for program evaluation 	<p>40 points</p> <p>Well Done</p> <p>Some what limited well articulated</p> <p>good points made @ challenges</p>
<p>B. <u>Observation (2-3 hours) of a preschool class to gather information about</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ program materials that illustrate program practices (see Appendix F) ➤ modifications utilized (See Appendix H, p. 464) ➤ specific examples of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) ➤ specific examples family-centered programming and family participation ➤ instructional strategies observed that promote (communication, motor, social, cognition, literacy, self help) ➤ schedule and lay out of the class - also time needed for schedule 	<p>40 points</p> <p>did not see family centeredness addressed intertwined within single act.</p> <p>visual would be helpful for layout</p>
<p>C. <u>Written Paper</u> including responses to A and B (above) and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ your perspective of the Strengths and Challenges of the program. 	<p>10 points</p> <p>See notes on paper</p>
<p>D. <u>Presentation</u> (20 minutes) on the observed program. Reflecting on your observations, interview and, the material presented in class and text, describe the strengths and challenges of the observed program in light of class discussions, current DAP and DEC Recommended Practices.</p>	<p>10 points</p> <p>Very Thorough! Where do children come from other programs? Most come from Child Outreach.</p>

5.07

Kinda

DD. Parental Attitudes

S/Leary Beh. Disorder

- Morning Message
- Sight word - Circle
- Learning through play
- Good Techniques
- Transition w/ Music!
- Child Choice - Poem/Songs!
- Good Modifications
- Differentiation
- Variety of Manipulative

Strengths

Challenges

- Placement of Children - teacher has no voice
- No communication / pre transition
- Reading Program in Park Modified for kids w/ dis.
- little / No Parent Input

Early Childhood Program Observation and Teacher Interview

Emily Feustel
SPED 516
Prof. Favazza
March 4, 2008

The early childhood program observation took place in an integrated pre school located in Providence, RI. Martin Luther King School is located on the east side of Providence and houses pre school through grade six. There are three pre schools within this building; two full day integrated pre school classrooms and one half day integrated pre school classroom.

Interview

The program that was observed was a full day integrated pre school class with fourteen students (this program could hold up to fifteen students). There were six students (could have up to seven) with special needs and eight typically developing peers. These children can range in age from three years to five years old. The majority of the students (eight of them) just missed, by a couple months or less, the cut off for kindergarten. The remaining seven are all four years old. The disabilities represented in this class range from developmental delay, to speech/language, to behavior/emotional disorder. The teacher in this classroom has been an early childhood teacher for almost twenty years and she has two assistants in the room.

6 ratio
14
What do you think @ the ratio?

The teacher believes that this program's philosophy is grounded in the fact that everyone in her class can learn from everyone else. She believes that her program emphasizes cooperative learning and she strives to create a learning community within her classroom. Also foundational to this program's philosophy is that every child is entitled to an education. Because of this, the teacher strives to meet each individual learner's needs while at the same time bringing them all together as a community of learners.

With this philosophy in mind, the teacher thinks that the inclusion of children with disabilities can be very effective. She believes that the benefits of inclusion include

learning from peers, having good peer role models, and also acceptance among all peers that we are all different. The teacher believes that, at this age, the children really enjoy helping one another. Because of this, she says that they can learn a lot from one another. With these benefits, there are also challenges. Because there are fourteen students in her class, the teacher sometimes finds it difficult to meet all of their needs on a daily basis. Each child in her class is on a completely different developmental level, so it is challenging to try to meet all of their needs everyday. She states that there is also a conflict between making sure that the children going to kindergarten are ready and also between meeting all of the differing IEP goals. There are many expectations (from the district in terms of getting the children ready for kindergarten and also from the state in terms of meeting IEP goals) from many different people, so it can be hard to find a balance. Finally, because the typically developing peers are supposed to be peer models, she believes that there needs to be a more individualized placement process. In other words, she has gotten a lot of typically developing peers that have some behavioral issues. The teacher states that she ends up having to deal with a lot of these issues on a daily basis and therefore she questions these peers role in actually being good models for the other children in her class.

good

Many good points ↑

Emily - Subheadings would be helpful. Please use in next paper. 😊

This particular program, being that it is a full day class with three adults in the room, has a high capacity for implementing the children's IEPs. Also, the teacher has gotten to know each one of her students very well and has written index cards (full of their objectives) that all of the adults in the room can use as 'cheat sheets' when working with an individual child.

When I entered the room, all the children were on the rug. Some children had a weighted ball to hold, others had a picture card that they had used to make the transition to the rug. First, the teacher reviewed their daily schedule and focused on pointing out

what was coming next. Then, the teacher kept the children engaged by keeping a fairly fast pace to circle time and she moved from one thing to the next in fairly rapid succession (from morning message to calendar to weather, etc.). By doing this the children maintained interest and were actively engaged in the lesson. When transitioning to a table activity, the teacher had one child chose a music and movement activity. The children danced and sang a song and then knew to transition to the table. This allowed for a very smooth transition. I thought that this was a very well run circle time that was inclusive to all abilities. The teacher made accommodations for some students which included the weighted ball or the picture. Also, it was important, especially for the students with cognitive delays, for the teacher to outline what was coming next. When it was time for that transition, I thought it was great that she used music to move to the next activity. Not only did it work on gross motor and communication, but it was a different kind of cue to prompt a transition. *pacing.*

When the children got to the table they were asked to look in a magazine and find two modes of transportation, then they were asked to cut these pictures out. While this may seem like a higher level activity for children ages three through five, there were accommodations made so that all children could participate. This means that there was not one set way to complete the activity so that all the children, no matter where their developmental level, could participate. Some children, instead of looking through the entire magazine, were given a page from a magazine and were asked to point to the car on the page. Then, using hand-over-hand and modified scissors, these children were able to cut out their pictures and participate in the activity. The teacher had really differentiated, depending on the level of the learner, her instruction and the desired outcome. In this way, all students could participate and also work toward their individual goals and objectives. *yes.*

good examples

The set up of the room and the centers was conducive to an inclusive classroom. The teacher had a variety of different manipulatives. These manipulatives were selected with thought given to choking hazards. These materials were then found in some see-through containers and some containers with lids to prompt the children to ask for help and also to teach self help skills. The manipulatives were very organized and could be found in one center. However, I noticed that the teacher allowed the children to take the manipulatives to any center within the room or to the tables. The fact that the children were allowed to do this encouraged the development of social skills (asking a friend to help them move a big box), gross motor skills (moving the box around the room), communication skills (asking the teacher for help), etc. The teacher also continually switched out the manipulatives so that there was always something new and different to discover. In her dramatic play area, there was a large mirror and items to use for dress up. There were also a lot of toys that represent real objects (iron, telephone, kettle) so that the children could engage in pretend play. These centers were just two examples of how, during free play, all children regardless of developmental level could be engaged. It is also important to point out that, during center time, one of the assistants was walking from center to center encouraging children to try different play sequences or to try something new and different with the manipulatives. The children were very supported during this free play time in their day.

Overall, the teacher thought that her room and the program was conducive to implementing the children's IEPs. This capacity was seen, first, in her ability to know the children and modify instruction accordingly. I thought it was a really great idea to put the children's objectives and goals on index cards. That way, the teacher or assistants could make a quick reference to see what goals the child needed to work on and also to track progress. The capacity to implement IEP goals was also seen in the configuration

of a room that was a safe environment for children to explore and discover. The centers were set up so that the children could engage in a wide variety of activities no matter what developmental level they were at. Also, the teacher's schedule and emphasis on fast paced activities kept the children engaged and comfortable because they always knew what was coming next.

Not only was this program able to implement IEPs successfully, but it was also able to support the various levels of child development. Within each portion of the day, it seemed like the teacher was trying to support as many areas of development as possible. Instead of explicitly focusing on one area of development, she was able to integrate and promote child development in the areas of communication, motor, social, self help, cognitive and literacy.

There is no set curriculum given to the teacher of this program. She has been teaching in early childhood special education for almost twenty years, so she has ^{developed} come up with a really great curriculum that integrates all types of learning and development. This teacher really understands the importance of integrating all areas of development into each lesson. Of course there will be certain areas that are the focus of a lesson, however she really strives to support all areas of development in each lesson she teaches. Along with this curriculum, the teacher has gotten to know each child's strengths and needs, so she plays off of that as well.

One example of her ability to incorporate all areas of development during lessons is that, during circle time, as part of the curriculum, the teacher reads a morning message. During the observation, after the morning message was read, the teacher asked a child to tell her a story. As the child told the story, the teacher wrote the words down on the chart paper. Then, she had the child sign her name at the bottom of the story. This one portion of the activity touched on communication, motor and literacy for the child telling the

developed based on RI ELS?

Yes.

story and literacy and communication for all the children listening. Furthermore, after the story was told and the teacher had re-read the story, the teacher then went on to ask questions about the story. This portion of the activity helped to develop the student's cognitive and communication skills. Then, after the teacher had asked the questions, she asked two students to ask the author of the story questions about the story. This portion went on to develop the children's communication and social skills. This is just one example, which only took the teacher about three minutes to complete, of how this classroom was able to support the various levels and degrees of development.

In addition to the various ways child development is integrated throughout the curriculum, certain strategies are also used within the classroom to promote child development. For example, during lunch the children need to use their words to ask for help. In other words, they can't just hold a bag in front of the teacher's face. The teacher prompts, "what do you need to say." If the child was unable to respond to that, the teacher would say "you need to say 'help me please.'" This small exchange promotes communication and also, eventually, self help and motor skills. For another child, who did say 'help me please,' the teacher encouraged the child to try to open the bag on her own. When the child struggled with that, the teacher used hand-over-hand to show the child how they would go about opening the bag. This act promoted self help and motor skills. These strategies really encourage language and communication development. The teacher is not there to do things for the students, but instead is there to teach the students how to become independent successful learners. At the same time, the teacher is not the 'sage on the stage' but rather the 'guide on the side,' offering direction and support when needed. The strategies used within this classroom are very child directed and child centered.

It is through various and ongoing assessment that this classroom is able to support its learners and create child directed lessons that support each child's development.

When the children first arrive at school, the teacher first observes the various levels of development. Then, a more formal assessment ^{such as} is given to learn more about what are each child's strengths and areas of concern. These assessments are created by the teacher and they reflect the goals outlined in each child's IEP as well as the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards. These informal observations and assessments ^{such as} are done within the first few weeks of school and the results are used to create a curriculum that supports all learners at the various levels of development.

There are also ongoing assessments and observations that are done throughout the school year to monitor progress. Because the teacher has written each child's IEP goals on index cards, that she keeps on her or very close by, she is able to make daily notes on each child's progress towards their goals. There are also quarterly assessments that were created by the teacher that take into account each individual child's goals as well as the RIELS. In other words, assessment in this classroom is ongoing in order to track progress as well as inform instruction.

The ongoing assessment that this teacher does also involves the parents. This teacher firmly believes that parents know their children best, therefore, it only makes sense to elicit their help in the assessment process. At the beginning of the year, the teacher sends home a survey to each family. This survey asks parents about their child's perceived strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes. The survey also asks about the family structure and what the parents really want their child to be able to do after being in this integrated pre school. The teacher then takes this information and is able to use it in planning and guiding instruction (i.e. capitalize on student's likes, address areas of need). After this initial survey, the teacher also meets with the family after each quarterly

assessment. In doing this, the parents get to express their feelings about the accuracy of the assessment and the teacher can also get feedback as to different strategies that seem to be working at school as well as at home. These meetings also ensure that the teacher and the family are on the same page in terms of the child's upcoming objectives and goals and how both parts (home and school) of this child's life will work to meet these goals.

While the teacher is able to use parent input during assessment and the implementing of the IEP, the district seems to take a multidisciplinary team approach when it comes to placement and services. The teacher states that, this year, the Child Outreach teams have been evaluating the child, writing the IEP and holding the IEP meeting without any teacher or service provider input. The children in her classroom have been coming in with the IEPs already signed and sometimes, the teacher has not even gotten to meet the parents and the parents have not had the opportunity to see the placement or talk with service providers. This approach to the placement of children with IEPs can not even be considered a multidisciplinary approach because the people who will actually end up servicing the child do not get to meet or have any input until everything is all said and done. This teacher believes that in doing this, the Child Outreach teams are just placing the children wherever there is an open spot, instead of finding a placement that is the least restrictive environment for the child. This teacher thinks this is a huge disservice to both the child and the family and she is working towards getting some set procedures that the placement teams have to follow before they can just throw a child and a family into a program that they haven't even been introduced to. Apart from the placement of the children, the teacher says that the service providers within her building (OT,PT,SLP) take a multidisciplinary approach when evaluating and providing therapies for ~~servicing~~ the children. She says that there is no common planning time allotted for service providers to meet and share assessment results or strategies that they are using

Wow.
Challenge?

good point

Professional language?

challenge?

within their distinct field. The planning is not integrated and the only time the service providers really get an opportunity to see each other is when they are picking the children up for services. This teacher would like to see the district move towards a more transdisciplinary team approach. She believes that only in doing this can each child's needs be met to the best of all service providers' abilities.

Challenge?

As with the placement of children in her classroom, there don't really seem to be any set procedures to follow for transition planning. On average, this teacher meets with the parents, usually in May, and discusses placement for the next school year. The teacher says that, at this meeting, she recommends a kindergarten placement (self contained, integrated, or regular with resource) or an integrated pre school placement (usually the child will stay with her for a second year). The teacher has no involvement with where the child is placed, only what kind of setting. She says that it is only the parents who know their rights who step forward and ask the pre school supervisor to visit the different settings before a final placement is decided. If the parents agree to a setting and don't ask to see them before hand, the district just places them in a school that has the recommended setting and that is closest to their house. The teacher says that both the parents and the teacher are pretty removed from the transition planning. Ideally, this teacher would like to see the family be able to visit multiple classrooms and, because they know their child the best, then be able to make an informed decision on where their child should be placed. Unfortunately this only seems to happen in maybe ten percent of the cases.

Challenge?

Does the teacher inform parents of their rights?

Challenge?

As with the lack of procedures to follow for transition planning, there also seems to be a lack of procedures used in program evaluation. This teacher says that, after teaching for almost twenty years, she has not been officially observed and evaluated within the past ten years. In addition, because there is no set curriculum, it is hard for the

Challenge?

Challenge?

program supervisor to evaluate the program. Each teacher has to create his or her own curriculum with little or no guidance from the district. Therefore, in terms of formal program evaluation, there really isn't any. However, this teacher implements certain strategies for evaluating the successes of her program. First, she plans her lessons one week ahead of time and tailors the lessons to meet each child's individual needs and goals. After she teaches these lessons, she makes notes in her planner as to whether the lesson met her desired outcome and what to do differently next time. She takes time at the end of everyday to evaluate the goals of the day, whether those goals were met, what aspects of the lessons worked and what aspects of the lessons didn't work. In addition to this planner, the teacher also creates portfolios for each child. In these portfolios are copies of the children's work and observations (done by herself and her assistants) over a period of time. At the end of each quarter, she looks at the portfolios to assess progress, not only in the child's development, but also in the program. Based on the children's portfolios she asks herself whether or not the desired outcomes and goals of the program are being met. The teacher constantly assesses her teaching style and methods in order to teach each child to the best of her ability.

While she probably is a great teacher, who objective prog. eval on set indicators - they will never know how effective it is

Observation

When I entered the classroom, the children were engaged in free play activities. This was at the start of their day and, as a routine, the teacher always has the children enter the classroom, put their parent-teacher folder in the folder bin and then they get to participate in an activity of their choosing. This gives the teacher some time to look through all the folders and see if there were any notes from the parents. She also has the

opportunity to look at some of the students' journals that the parent and teacher write in each day. Also, during this time, the assistants in the room are walking around and facilitating the play within the different centers.

After the free play time, it is time to go to the bathroom. The teacher rings a bell that signals clean up time for the children and then they line up. The teacher follows this same routine everyday so the children really know what to expect next. The class walks in a line to the bathroom. Some children need help with their pants at the bathroom and the teacher encourages them to ask for help and then uses hand over-hand to help them. In doing this, she is encouraging language development and communication as well as self help development. After the students have used the bathroom, they know to go to the sink and wash their hands (one squirt of soap, then pull the paper towel lever down three times). At the beginning of the year, the teacher taught them this routine to follow so that the children could become as independent as possible. After the bathroom, they walk in line back to the classroom.

Once in the classroom, the children sit on their spot on the rug (the rug has animals on it and each child has an assigned animal). The teacher begins by reviewing the schedule for the day. This schedule is always in the same place and the teacher always reviews it at this time of the day. Each activity on the schedule has words accompanied with a picture. The schedule is kept very succinct so that the children can anticipate what is coming next. Also, when the class is done with an activity, the teacher turns the activity card over. On this particular day the top to bottom schedule had circle time, then art, then centers, lunch, music, nap, story time, playtime and snack. After reviewing the schedule, the teacher began reading a morning message with some blanks in it (___ am happy to ___ you). The teacher asks for help filling in the blanks and then calls on a child to tell her a short story. As the child is telling the story, the teacher

Schedule
w/
time?
frame?

writes down his or her words. After the story is done and the teacher reads through it once, she asks the children questions about the story. This motivates the children to be paying attention during the telling of the story and also fosters their literacy, communication, and cognition development.

After the morning message, the teacher jumps right into calendar time. She asks the students what month it is, what day it is, what number day it is and what year it is. The students sing two songs for the days of the week and one child gets to point to the days of the week while they are singing. Then, one child gets to count the days in the month in order to determine what number day they are on. They use the pointer to point to each number while they are counting. They also sing a song for the months and a child gets to point to the months when singing. The teacher follows this same exact routine for calendar time everyday. In doing this, the children feel comfortable because they know what is coming next. Also, while she does follow the same calendar routine everyday, the skills focused on during this time also encourage different developmental skills. For example, the singing of the same songs everyday encourages language development and fluency (especially for the students who may have articulation needs). Calendar time also taps into cognitive development because they are learning the sequence of days, numbers, months, etc. in a fun and enjoyable way. They are also using some motor control and literacy skills (left to right progression) when they have to point to the numbers, months, days, using a pointer.

After the calendar, the children do a transitioning exercise that they do everyday. The teacher has a student pick one song (there are ten of them that are illustrated on a Velcro board) and the students stand up and dance to this song. This is a great way to acknowledge the time for transition and it also works on gross motor skills because the children are asked to do certain movements in the song. Overall, circle time was very

fast paced. The teacher kept the students attention for the entire time and, because they follow the same routine during circle everyday, there was a sense of self control on the part of the children because they knew what was coming next and how long they were going to be asked to sit.

After the song was over, the children went right to their spot at three different tables that are centered in the room. Once there, the teacher quickly reviewed the alphabet. This school is piloting a new reading series that is very teacher directed. Everyday, the teacher is asked to do direct instruction activities that revolve around phonemic awareness and concepts of print. So, with this reading series in mind, the children sang their new alphabet song and then reviewed the sounds of the letters that they had already done (A,C,L,M,P,R,S,T). The teacher kept this portion of the lesson fast paced because she acknowledges that it is not really developmentally appropriate for all the students in her class to be identifying letters and learning letter sounds. After the alphabet, the teacher reads three poems everyday. At the front of the classroom, the teacher has a flip chart of fifteen poems. She chooses three students a day to come up and pick a poem. The class reads the poems together and the child points to the words as he or she is reading them. These two activities also promote language/communication development (because the children have gotten to know the poems and the alphabet song so it encourages fluency), cognition (because they are learning their letters and sounds), literacy (left to right movement) and motor (because the child has to move the pointer from left to right).

After this work on phonemic awareness skills, the children were asked to do a table activity that revolved around their theme for the month: transportation. Each child was given a magazine, or pages from a magazine, and they were asked to find two pictures of some type of transportation. Once they found the pictures, they were asked to

cut them out and bring them to the front of the room to show the class. There were four children at each table and only two pair of scissors. The teacher did this intentionally so that they could work on their social and sharing skills. After using their cognitive (looking through a magazine to find a mode of transportation), social (sharing the scissors), self help (being able to speak up and ask for help or the scissors), literacy (knowing how to turn the pages of a magazine- like a book), and motor (cutting the pictures out), the students then had to use their communication skills to describe to the class the modes of transportation that they found. This activity really touched on and supported the areas of child development.

Once the children were done with their table activities, it was center time. The class was broken into five different groups and the groups went to five different centers. It was very obvious that this transition to center time was a routine that had been taught. The children knew that, after they had cleaned up their table time activity, they were to go over to the center board and find their name. Once they found their name they looked at the center their name was under. This center board had a picture of each center with the name of that center on the card. Most of the children were able to find their name, then transition to the center with little or no teacher prompts or involvement. The centers that the children went to, in groups of two or three, were: housekeeping, art and writing, block center, the teacher's center, or the game center with one of the assistants. Because there were five groups and five centers, the teacher just rotates the groups so that each group gets to go to every center within one week's time. It was very impressive to see that the students not only got themselves to their centers, but also knew what to do when they got to each center. The teacher said that, at the beginning of the year, she taught them what to do and the different choices within each center. This center time allows for the teacher and the assistant to work with small groups in which the activity matches each

child's goals and needs. Also, for the students who were in centers on their own, it was a time for them to capitalize on their curiosities and really take part in preferred, child-initiated activities. There were so many developmental areas that were touched on within each center, especially because they were involved in play.

After center time, the teacher rang a bell and the students knew to clean up and line up for lunch. The teacher walked the students down to lunch and, for those who still needed help, she did hand over hand to carry their trays. Once seated, the children were encouraged to "ask three before me." That means that, since there was only one assistant with fourteen children, they were encouraged to ask their friends for help if they needed it. The assistant also encouraged the children to use their words if they needed help instead of just holding up their milk to be opened. Once the children asked, the assistant used hand over hand in order to assist them. In doing this, lunch really became a time for socializing, communicating needs and wants, and development of self help skills. Once lunch was over, it was nap time and that signaled the end of my observation.

The materials that were found within this classroom, as well as the layout of the room, really supported this program's practice and philosophy. The layout of the room was very conducive to social interactions. The centers were clearly defined around the perimeter of the room, however, the children weren't limited to playing with the materials only in one center. The set up of the room allowed for a free flow of traffic around the room. This seemed to encourage the children to use materials from certain centers and bring them to wherever they were playing in the room. While the centers were clearly defined and labeled, there was also a whole group portion in the center of the room. There were three tables in the center of the room where children could bring materials from different centers to play with and they also used these tables for group activities (such as art or snack). The materials found within the centers took into

visual would be help full

consideration the ages and developmental levels of the children. There was nothing in the centers that could be a choking hazard and the materials were organized, at eye level, in bins that were labeled with words and a picture. There were also a lot of materials that represented real life objects (such as an iron, plates, food) so that the children could engage in a lot of pretend play.

For varying levels, sizes, abilities

Throughout the course of this observation, I was able to notice many modifications that were made for many of the children within the room. The first modification that I noticed was that one child carried a physical object to help him with transitions. For example, when it was time to go to the bathroom, he was able to carry a bottle of soap, or when it was time to go to the table activity, he was given a crayon. These items were used on a daily basis and helped this one particular child to transition from one activity to the next. Another noted modification was that, even though circle time was very fast paced, the teacher knows when a certain child can no longer sit and be engaged anymore. For this one child, she had an all done star chart where every few minutes the assistant would say, for example, "you are sitting so nicely" and put one star on the Velcro chart. Once the child got four stars, he was able to remove himself from the rug and go participate in a quiet activity. The teacher said that when he started, this child couldn't sit on the rug for more than two minutes. They have slowly been building up his time on the rug and this all done chart is a way for him to monitor and self check his behavior because he is able to anticipate how much longer he needs to be engaged in this one activity. Other accommodations made during circle time and during the table activity were the use of a weighted ball or a cushion. These objects were used as part of a sensory diet and really helped the children stay engaged and focused. During the table activity, there were other noted modifications. For example, some children were given a whole magazine and had to find two modes of transportation, while other children were

Good Examples.

given two pages from a magazine and had to point out the mode of transportation on those two pages. The teacher had modified the lesson depending on certain children's abilities and needs. When it came time to cut the pictures out, some students were given modified scissors and some students needed hand-over-hand assistance. Finally, some of the children had seating modifications (some closer to the teacher, others with a certain friend that was a good peer model). There were many modifications and accommodations made in this classroom so that at any given moment, each child was learning to the best of their ability.

Developmentally appropriate practice is defined as a teacher's implementing of certain strategies and techniques that add to a child's development. As stated previously, there were many instances of DAP taking place in this classroom. The first instance of DAP relies on the teachers response to each individual child's strengths and needs. This teacher, with a wealth of knowledge about child development, used various assessments and surveys to discover the strengths, needs, and interests of each child and the various family backgrounds that existed in her class. Then, using this information that was gained on each specific child, in compilation with her knowledge of and experience with child development, she created a developmentally appropriate curriculum that suited the needs of each child as an individual. More specifically, this teacher understood that each area of development (cognitive, social, communication, etc.) is intertwined and the skills develop along a continuum. With this in mind, the teacher created lessons that touched on the various domains of child development. This teacher also created a developmentally appropriate classroom when she acknowledged that each child develops at a different rate and time. Her instruction was very individualized and touched on the different developmental levels within the classroom. The teacher also understood that the culture and social experiences within a family influences a child's development. In

asking the parents certain questions about routines at home, what their perceived strengths and needs of their child is, and what they want their child to get from the program, the teacher is taking into account the child's life outside of school and creating a curriculum that involves families. The teacher also takes into account the fact that children learn best through play. She has created many opportunities in her classroom that focus on play and child-initiated activities. She understands her role within the classroom is to really facilitate this play so that children can develop socially, cognitively, and communication skills. Finally, the teacher has created a predictable and safe environment for these students to be engaged in everyday. It is known that development across the domains is encouraged when children feel safe and feel like part of a community. This teacher has created an environment where everyone feels safe and feels like they are valued. It is fairly obvious that this teacher has a good handle on developmentally appropriate practice and uses that knowledge to create a curriculum that is conducive to child development.

In addition to using assessments and the teacher's knowledge of child development, she also involves families when creating the curriculum. The first way that she involves families is through the family survey. As previously mentioned, this survey asks about their family structure, culture, and also about the needs and strengths of their child. The teacher uses this survey to get to know the families and the child better. The teacher also sends home monthly newsletters. These newsletters let the parents know what is going on in school for the upcoming month and it also allows them to provide the teacher with any sort of feedback. With about five of her students, the teacher sends home a daily communication notebook. The teacher and parents have contact daily, so they can be very involved in every aspect of the child's education. Finally, with the quarterly progress reports, the teacher encourages every parent to come into school and

meet with her regarding their child's progress. So, even though they are in contact throughout the school year in many different ways, these quarterly, face to face meetings get the teacher and the families on the same page regarding the best interests of the child.

Strengths

There were many strengths seen within this pre school classroom. The first strength I saw within the classroom was the fact that the teacher was very knowledgeable about child development and used that knowledge in compilation with her knowledge about the students' strengths and needs in order to develop a curriculum. Within the curriculum, the teacher did a really great job at incorporating multiple developmental skills into the routine. She was able to support several objectives in each lesson while at the same time supporting the individual needs of the students within her classroom.

Not only were multiple skills incorporated into her lessons, but each activity was able to support multiple child development stages. She really knew the needs of her students and also had a very in-depth understanding of the levels of child development. In doing this, the teacher created a curriculum that really included all students, but at the same time also catered to each child's goals and objectives.

Furthermore, because this was an inclusive setting, this teacher also seemed to be able to embed each child's IEP goals and objectives into their daily routine. The teacher would not sit down and focus on one particular IEP goal with a child. Instead, progression towards the IEP goals was seen in daily interactions and lessons. The teacher did a really great job at embedding the goals into the curriculum in a way that was fun, engaging and child initiated.

In addition to knowing the children's strengths and needs within her classroom, I think this teacher was also able to capitalize on the students interests. All of the activities seen were very appealing to the children and most centered around socialization and play.

It is a known fact that children learn better when they are engaged in play that capitalizes on their interests, and I think this teacher really knew how to accomplish that.

Another known fact in child development centers around predictable routines. It is known that children are able to feel comfortable and be engaged in a routine when they know what to expect next. I think this teacher did an excellent job in establishing predictable routines that allowed the children to know what was coming next. This created a very safe and comfortable environment within the classroom.

Finally, I think this teacher did a really great job in self-evaluating. She dedicated a lot of her free time to reviewing the objectives of lessons and whether those objectives were met. She also focused a lot of time on documenting what worked in a lesson, and also what could be done differently next time. I think it is really great that this teacher spent so much time assessing her teaching style and the success of her lessons. This really showed me that she ultimately has the best interests of the children at heart and that she is really striving to meet each one of their needs on a daily basis.

Challenges

While the children in this classroom seemed to have most of their needs met in addition to making great progress, the teacher did express some challenges. The first challenge, which she is really working to try and change, is the fact that children are placed in her classroom with no input from herself, service providers, or parents. It is hard to really meet the needs of the child from day one when they are just being thrown into a classroom with no input from those who know the child best (the family) or the people who will be servicing the child. This teacher is really working towards changing this process so that everyone who will be spending time with this child will be on the same page from day one.

Are these challenges associated w/ primarily depending on self-eval? Such as ...?

What are your thoughts on other challenges? How could the program be improved from your perspective?

?

Another aspect dealing with children's placement is the team approach to placement. The people who first test these children never sit down and have a meeting with service providers. There is no background on the child given to the teacher. The IEP is written without any of the service providers being consulted and that IEP is basically the only outside information the teacher receives from the placement team. It would seem in the best interests of the child for everyone to sit down together (the people who tested the child, families, and future service providers) and talk about the child's strengths and needs BEFORE that child entered the classroom. There definitely seems like there is a need to move toward a more transdisciplinary approach so that everyone who has been involved and who will be involved with the child is on the same page and working toward the same goals. *good pt.*

It also seems to be challenging for this teacher to have no say or involvement in the transition process. This teacher has dealt with these students everyday for a whole school year, it would only make sense that she have some sort of meeting with the child's future teacher to discuss strengths, needs, strategies, modifications, etc. so that, from day one, this child's needs can be met to the best of the new teacher's abilities. There just seems to be a lack of continuity from year to year and in the end it seems like the children who end up really suffering from this.

Most of the challenges present in this classroom seemed to revolve around the special education system and how it is run in this district. It seems like there could be a much more effective way of planning instruction across the continuum that would, in the end, really end up benefiting the children. While these are challenges that this teacher is working on changing, I really do believe that this classroom meets the needs of every one of its learners and I can only see great progress being made in the future.

*Emily -
School districts
always pose challenges.
It is very easy to shove it
off on the district - instead
what are specific ways the
teacher could address the
challenge.*