

## **Facilitator Guide** Child Sessions

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## Getting Started

### Location

First things first! Think about the facility you plan to use for the program lessons. Plan how you can best offer and deliver the program within this space. Here are some important things to keep in mind as you plan:

- Is the classroom developmentally appropriate for small children? What about objects in the classroom? Are there objects that could be unsafe or could be distractions for children? Can these be moved or hidden during the sessions?
- How far are the restrooms from the classroom? Are the restroom facilities developmentally appropriate for small children? Will children be able to use the restrooms independently?
- Think about how your group of educators will respond and plan appropriately for each of these challenges, and others that may come up, as you get ready for class sessions.

### Preparing for Lessons

Careful preparation will help lessons go more smoothly and help make you more familiar with the program objectives and goals. Here are a few tips to help you prepare.

- Read through Child Lessons 1-7 to become familiar with the program's goals and objectives, activities, content, and layout.
- When the program gives you choices about what to do (for example, choosing a gathering song or a book), decide ahead of time what will work best for your particular class.
- Discuss and agree on each teacher's roles and responsibilities for delivering the curriculum. Child sessions are written so that they are delivered by two facilitators.
- Prepare and gather required program materials ahead of time. Each lesson requires materials. Some materials will be used across several lessons and other materials are specific to individual lessons.

Think about each educator's level of experience and whether she or he has worked with young children in group settings. Given that all educators will be interacting with children and parents, you may need to review guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice with your adult educators and child support staff to have greater success with the SEEDS program. We have included developmentally appropriate guidelines in the next section for you and your colleagues to review.



## Teacher's Guide for Developmentally Appropriate Practice

When delivering the child and family sessions in the SEEDS program, it is important that all teachers use **Developmentally Appropriate Practice** or DAP. DAP is based on research about how children develop and learn, and on what works (or doesn't work) in early learning settings. The DAP framework is the foundation of the SEEDS child program and is critical in helping educators achieve the program's learning goals. REMEMBER: Even though DAP is built into each session, the goals of the SEEDS program can't be achieved without you, the educator. Your interactions with the children are what will make the program a success.

### **DAP: Children's Development and Learning**

The SEEDS program is designed to help children 1) explore and talk about food and 2) identify and communicate when they are hungry, when they are full, and when they have finished eating.

**Children's development and learning occur sequentially.** Across weeks, the lessons build on one another. The lessons expand on topics from previous weeks to extend and deepen learning. For example, earlier lessons focus on children learning to identify how their stomachs feel, and introduces children to the vocabulary of "hungry", "just right", and "really full." A subsequent lesson helps children communicate when they have finished eating.

### **Children's development and learning occur at different rates.**

Children in your sessions will have different levels of experience and ability. The lessons address these differences through repetition of skill-building activities, such as repeating the same

activity with the dolls each week. This may seem repetitious, but it helps children learn by having educators reinforce the same concepts week after week. Remember to observe children in their learning so you can note those who may need more support.

**Children need a safe and comfortable environment.** Both the physical space and class atmosphere are important. If your session is not in an early learning classroom, look at your space from a young child's perspective. Is the room bright and welcoming? Is the furniture the right size for young children? Are there safety concerns you need to address? Are there objects that can be moved to reduce distractions?

As the teacher, you set the tone for the class. Welcome children warmly into the session. Children learn best when they have a secure relationship with you. Get to know each of the children. Establish ground rules for positive interactions among the children. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Be kind
- 2) Listening ears
- 3) Walking feet
- 4) Inside voices
- 5) Helping hands

Your goal should be to create a caring community of learners engaged in exploring food and eating together—adults and children alike.



**Acknowledge what children do or say.** Let children know that you have noticed what they did or said by giving positive attention (a nice comment, a smile, or just sitting nearby). Children don't follow a script. If something happens during a session that captures their attention, respond to their questions and then return to the lesson. In one SEEDS class, a doll's eye fell off and was lost. The children were concerned so the teacher made an eye patch from a sticker. That allowed everyone to focus on the lesson content once their concerns for the doll were addressed.

**Have fun!** Children will take their cue from you. If you are singing, moving, playing, and participating in the activities, the children will too. All adults present should participate in all activities in both the child and family sessions.

For more information, check out the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) website. The NAEYC website has extensive information about developmentally appropriate practice: <http://www.naeyc.org/dap/12-principles-of-child-development>

**About the Last Session and Graduation:** Take photos of the children throughout the sessions so that you can include each child in a slide show during graduation in Family Session 7 (the last session). Be sure parents have signed photo permission forms from your organization or institution before you take photos.

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## What to Do: Before Each Session

- Read through each lesson plan before the session. You want to avoid reading through the lesson plan in front of the children.
- Keep a bulleted list with notes on the sequence of the activities, but do not read the scripted child session lesson plan to the children. Knowing the lesson well enough so that you can "talk naturally" rather than "read" will make the activities more engaging and hold the children's interest.
- Highlight questions you want to ask or use for each lesson so that you are prepared for conversation.
- Reflect on challenges in the previous week and plan for how to address them in this week's classes. For example, if children are finishing their work early, what can you do to keep them involved and challenged? If there were behavioral concerns the week before, how can you help prevent these this week?

## What to Do: The Day of the Lesson

- Arrive ahead of time to set up and make sure the facility is safe and developmentally appropriate. Consider moving or disguising objects that might be a distraction or are not age appropriate.
- To help make a smooth transition for children, make sure all teachers participate in the gathering song and are prepared for all of the family and child session activities for the day.
- Prepare alternative activities for children who choose not to participate or who are struggling to participate in planned activities. (For example, have on hand coloring sheets and exploration kits with magnifying glasses and whole food items.)

