**Developmental Profile**

**Older Preschool**

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I am going to be working in the older preschool classroom at the Child Development Center at Keene State College. The ages range from four to five. At this time I do not know the amount of children. However, I am positive that the abilities and developmental milestones will vary. I will embrace each child on their individuality.

Preschoolers are extremely active; they are constantly running, and jumping. Preschoolers embrace the opportunity to move their bodies such as dancing, creative movement, role playing, and being outdoors where they have the freedom to move their bodies in such a way they choose. “They should spend at least a quarter of their school day in physical activity. This is an age when much learning is transmitted through the large muscles, when learning goes from the hand to the head, not the other way around. (Copple, 2009, p.114)” The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that preschoolers get sixty minutes of active movement each day (Copple, 2009, p.117). This does not need to take place all at once it can take place throughout the day. In conclusion preschoolers need to move and teachers need to plan movements to enhance preschooler’s physical development. Preschoolers benefit most from hands on activities such as dramatizing stories, squeezing play dough, hanging from the jungle gym, building with blocks, and getting messy with paint.

The development of basic movement takes place during the ages two – seven. This is called the ‘fundamental’ movement phase (Copple, 2009, p. 114). As each year progresses the child’s coordination grows. Four and five year olds have greater controls of their movements but, their movements are not yet fluid. Four year olds are often perceived as clumsy. They are often having spills and collisions. There is also a gender difference; girls tend to be more advanced within fine motor control and gross motor skills requiring precision, such as hopping and skipping; boys are generally are more advanced in skills that require force and power such as running and jumping (Copple, 2009, p.114).

Children between the ages of three – five are experiencing physical growth; some children experience as much growth as six inches over this three year period. Growth during this time period takes place mostly in the torso and the legs. “On average, children gain five to six pounds and two to three inches per year from age three to six. (Copple, 2009, p.114)”

During the preschool years children move through a sequence to develop their gross motor skills; “The sequence is a product of physical maturation, instruction, and opportunity to practice the newly discovered skills. (Copple, 2009, p.116)” Fine motor development can begin to develop during the preschool years by giving preschoolers opportunities to practice. “But they do not attain any kind of sophisticated manual dexterity. (Copple, 2009, p.116)” )” Finger dexterity begins to develop as children enter preschool. Dexterity of the fingers is how children are able to use their hands. Children strengthen this through manipulating playdough, block building, beads, and lacing. Bilateral coordination is another area that preschoolers are developing. Bilateral coordination is when one hands holds the other and maniupulates unscrewing a jar, clapping, holding a container, and putting objects in it. Bilateral coordination is also when both hands move activiely such as putting cubes together, stringing beads, and linking links. Hand eye coordination begins to develop in the first few months of life. Hand eye coordination is the ability to reach for something, and pick it up with accuracy.

Teachers can provide children with opportunities to develop their fine motor through planned experiences that children can explore; such as stocking the writing center with scissors, pencils that are developmentally appropriate size (smaller ex. Golf pencils), crayons, etc… You can also provide children with substances that they can manipulate such as play dough, clay, paint, shaving cream, sand, there are many options. Children need opportunities to practice and learn new physical skills. Teachers need to plan specific learning experiences to aide children in their physical development. Learning experiences can include inside/ outside activities, group games, small group games, individual movement stations, etc…to support development.

Preschoolers social emotional development is making tremendous strides during the ages three to five. They are forming relationships with others, understanding themselves better, and how to interpret their own feelings/emotions. During the preschool years the children’s social development is growing. There are four categories mentioned in Developmentally Appropriate Practice that describe preschoolers social development; “(1) Children’s social interactions with adults and peers, (2) development of prosocial behavior, (3) aggression and other challenging behavior, and (4) sense of self in relation to others (Copple, 2009, p.120).”

Preschoolers are becoming more aware of their social interactions. Preschools are much larger than most immediate families the children have. The children are much more aware and connected to their social interactions within preschool settings. Preschoolers generally form close relationships with their teachers this in turn determines their success within school. Peer relationships are becoming more and more important during the ages of three – five. Preschoolers are most commonly participating in associative play, cooperative play, and on looker play. Associative play is when a group of children are playing together with no real goals set. Cooperative play happens later in the preschool years. There is typically a leader and there is rules and common goal between the groups. On looker play is when a child watches a group, and may even ask questions but makes no effort to join the play. Solitary and parallel play is evident at this age as well but less common. Solitary play is when a child chooses a toy or activity that is different than the rest of the class; the child does this independently. Parallel play is when children play next to each other with similar toys but no interaction. The play stages vary from child to child, day to day, but the most common is associative, cooperative, and on looker play.

During the ages three – six children are developing their prosocial behaviors. They are becoming caring, they share, and they want to help others. There cognitive development has developed enough at this stage where they can begin to understand the role of the other.

Aggression and other challenging behavior that was evident during the toddlers years may be diminishing however the expansion of cognitive development leads to ‘verbal bullying’ children’s vocabularies have expanded and they had began to use their words to hurt; such as ‘you cannot come to my birthday party’ (Copple, 2009, p.122). Verbal bullying is primarily seen at the end of the preschool years because the child’s language has advanced. Aggression does not completely go by the wayside. Aggression and other challenging behaviors need to be addressed early so that the behavior does not carryover and affect learning in the higher grades.

During the ages three-five children are gaining a better understanding of self. Preschoolers usually view themselves as ‘all or nothing’ (Copple, 2009, p.123); for instance someone is either nice or mean not anywhere in between. Self esteem begins to develop when the children are gaining a better understanding of themselves. Children at this age have a sense of themselves through an adults eyes, such as if an adult always tells them that they are a good writer they will think they are a good writer but maybe not a good dancer. They may be a good dancer just an adult has never complimented them on it.

Children during the preschool years are developing their understanding of their emotions; they are able to verbalize their emotions. Being able to verbalize their emotions helps them to better understand them. With the assistance of adults children are able to sort through their emotions, learn coping strategies, and build resilience (Copple, 2009, p.123). Emotional development is separated into three categories (1) development of emotional competence, (2) development of conscience, and (3) stress, coping, and resilience.

“Preschoolers are able to express more complex social emotions such as pride, guilt, and shame and do so with a broader repertoire of facial expressions, gestures, words, and symbols. (Copple, 2009, p.123)” Preschoolers are able to describe their emotions and usually others emotions. Children’s school readiness depends on how children regulate their negative emotions. Children who are better able to express their negative emotions in acceptable ways are much more socially competent.

During the preschool years children are developing a conscience. They are internalizing values, morals, and expectations of behaviors. Children have a large understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Preschoolers are more aware of others. Children reflect the personalities of their parents; if their parents are kind and giving the child will reflect that, if the parent is aggressive and combative the child will reflect that (Copple, 2009, p. 122).

Stress for children is much the same as adults, it comes about when a situation is more than we can handle. When a child or adult is stressed they respond with their emotions, bodies, and behavior (Copple, 2009, p.125). Some of the stressors in children’s lives are divorce, hospitalization, and entering a new school (Copple, 2009, p. 125). Some of the causes of distress for children could be the association of pretend and reality. Stress helps children to develop coping skills on how to deal with their emotions and how to regulate them; when a situation is more than they can handle. For that reason not all stress is negative. However, long term stressors can result in long term developmental disabilities. Children need adults to help them develop a sense of how to regulate and deal with stress. Teachers can help children by creating a nurturing environment that promotes community building and individual recognition. This is done through making each child feel welcome, safe, and part of the community. Teachers lead through example; such as positive language and open ended discussions. Teachers can help children by reading books about feelings, leading group games, and discussions on feelings. Developing a relationship built on trust and respect will help children feel safe with you. This will bridge the result of children openly sharing with you their emotions.

During the preschool years cognitive development is ever growing. Children between the ages of four-five can develop scenarios such as you are the mom and you are the dad; they understand that they are acting out an imaginary scene. They are beginning to organize their ideas into categories. Through play their use of symbols advances such as drawings. Children’s play takes on deeper depths such as a toddler may pretend to drink from a cup and preschooler may pretend to host a tea party (Copple, 2009, p.131). They are moving away from self centered play, moving towards involving others. “At age four-five children often collaborate with a peer or peers to create a scene with various roles and story lines. (Copple, 2009, p.131)”

Copple (2009) found the following:

During pretend play children are practicing sustained attention, memory, logical reasoning, language and literacy skills, imagination, creativity, understanding of emotions, ability to reflect one’s own thinking, inhibit impulses, control ones behavior, and take on the role of the other. (p.132)

Each one of those skills takes time to develop; and preschoolers should be given the opportunity to practice those skills. Teachers can support this through questions, cues, and positive modeling. For example if a child is getting frustrated because they want to draw a picture of themselves and they ask you for help instead of you drawing it for them you could ask them questions about themselves such as “Do you have a head? What shape is your head a square or a circle? Do you have legs? Are they a triangle or a line? What other body parts do you have? What shape do you think they should be? By forming a dialogue with the children you can help support their development. The role of the teacher is to support the development children. This is done through learning what each individual child’s strengths and weaknesses are and discovering how each child learns best.

NUMERACY SKILLS!

During the preschool years children’s language and literacy development is growing tremendously. Language development helps children to verbally express their emotions. Children who have more advanced vocabularies are better able to regulate their emotions. During the preschool years children are able to express their feelings, desires, ideas, and respond to those of others (Copple, 2009, p.142). Children often use language to express completions such as ‘I did it!’ as children mature this becomes less apparent. As children mature they develop private speech and they are able to plan ahead, control, and reflect their actions and behaviors.

Teachers are there to help children continue on the language and literacy continuum. Some children come from language abundant backgrounds and some do not. All children will benefit from conversations with adults and peers. Teachers need to take the time to give children their individual sole attention. Teachers should follow students lead and add responses that extend and enrich the conversation. Enhancing what the child has said helps the child to expand their meaning and linguistic learning. Conversations should be of experiences, events, and people that are beyond the here and now, such as events from the past and future, or the imagination (Copple, 2009, p.144). “Such conversations will aid the child in explanations, descriptions, narratives, and pretend talk. (Copple, 2009, p.145)” Teachers can expand children’s vocabulary in everyday conversation such as using larger words that they may not know but providing a brief explanation.

Teachers can expand vocabulary by reading high quality books aloud. Teachers should make a point to not only read aloud to the whole group but individuals and small groups. This allows for more one on one time. Children would have more opportunity to choose books that pique their interest and more time to ask questions and participate in conversations. The classroom should be stocked with high quality books that are age appropriate and can peak the children’s interest in a specific subject. Books should be rotated to keep the children interested and on the continuous development of their literacy development.

A predictor of reading readiness is phonological awareness. That means noticing the sounds; beginning sounds rhythms, rhymes, other sound similarities, syllables, and phonemes. Children develop these skills through teacher led learning experiences such as rhyming games, singing songs, chanting rhymes, finger plays, and clapping out syllables to their names. Children can experience the written language through the classroom library and the writing center which should be stocked with a variety of materials that will provide the students with the opportunity to creatively express their knowledge and expand their knowledge of print. The children are constantly exposed to print such as charts, sign in sheets, name tags, and signs. During circle time or small group time teachers might point out print and model reading from left to right pointing at each word.

For children to be ready to read they need to have a strong understanding of the alphabet and the sounds, be fluent in the language, have adult modeling of vocabulary and be read to everyday. Teachers can provide this in a variety of ways, such as anyone whose name starts with an A line up. In your classroom an alphabet chart should be displayed the children can refer to that when they are ready. Alphabet books can help children connect sounds with letters because of the picture letter connections. Invite children to say the name of the picture and letter expanding into other objects that begin with that letter.

During the preschool years they are beginning writing in the scribble stage. Then they produce letter like forms, eventually recognizable letters, and developmentally spellings (Copple, 2009, p.148). During the preschool years being able to write is not a huge priority because that could lead to frustration. Providing the children with examples of print and ways to express their print is a priority. You can have them dictate a story to you; they can illustrate it. The children can witness your print and their story together and eventually making the connection.

During the preschool years teachers are providing children with meaningful learning experiences that promote their development. They are not forced activities because that could lead to frustration which could stall children’s progress. Forming relationships with your students’ helps teachers reach each student on a personal level to know what they are interested in, aid in the planning process of learning experiences and build curriculum that is meaningful.

**Resources**

Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early*

*childhood programs serving children from birth to age 8.* (3rd edition). Washington, DC:

National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Play. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.healthofchildren.com/P/Play.html