Core Function → **Pre-School/Early Learning**

Effective Practice → **Provide children quality early learning opportunities**

Indicator: All pre-K teachers ensure that all students are involved in activities each day that are designed to stimulate development in all domains: social-emotional, physical, approaches to learning, language, and cognitive development. (5126)

Explanation: Each state has recognized the importance of focusing on the five domains of development as these domains are present in each state's Early Learning Guidelines. (Click here to view each state's guidelines). State Early Learning Guidelines describe expectations for young children before the age of school entry. Moreover, the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (2013) has issued a policy that high-quality early education supports all five domains of early childhood development.

Questions: Do teachers intentionally support development across all domains in their daily activities? And does the school administration support teachers in implementing curricula that support development across all domains?

Mrs. Rita Mae Perkins, an elementary school principal, wants the pre-K children at her school to succeed as they transition into kindergarten and higher grades. She is especially concerned about her students doing well on grade three standardized assessment tests, so she strongly encourages the pre-K staff at her school to focus more time on literacy and math.

Mrs. Edena Babic, a pre-K teacher at Mrs. Perkins' school, believes addressing all the developmental domains best supports students' academic success. However, she feels pressure to make her classroom resemble higher grades and, as a result, feels there is less time for dramatic play and other activities that involve students being out of their desks.

While walking to her office, Mrs. Perkins hears a lot of noise coming from Mrs. Babic's classroom and stops by to check it out. There is a lot of activity in the room, with children at different centers. Mrs. Babic appears to be playing with a group of children in a play kitchen. Mrs. Perkins remembers the last time she walked by the room and saw children sitting in a large group as Mrs. Babic held up a picture and talked about feelings. Mrs. Perkins want to ensure these students are ready for the rigor of elementary school and arranges a time to meet with Mrs. Babic to discuss focusing time and energy on math and language instead of play.

When Mrs. Babic learns about the purpose of the meeting, she knows she will need to make a case for how these activities support math and language development, and how they support development in the other domains. She always wants to use it as an opportunity to discuss how address the importance of supporting children's development in all domains. She thinks about asking her assistant to film a session of dramatic play time so that she can explain moment by moment the skills the children are learning. For instance, she knows Lily needs support in fine motor skills and that letting her manipulate play dough is building this skill, which will help her be able to grip pencils and other materials in later grades.

If you were Mrs. Babic, how would you make the case for addressing all domains in daily activities? What additional evidence would you use? How can skills in social-emotional development and approaches to learning (e.g., initiative, motivation, and persistence) be an asset to children as they tackle learning in their current grade level as well as future grades? In what ways can teachers be intentional about addressing all domains? How can they assess if they are truly are covering all domains on a daily basis?

Young children's development occurs across multiple domains (Payton, Weissberg, Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Schellinger, & Pachan, 2008). Early learning opportunities that support the whole child lay the foundation for successful learning throughout that child's life. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, daily stimulation of each of the domains is important as "young children's development is strongly interconnected, with positive outcomes in one area relying on development in other domains" (NAEYC & NAECS-SDE, 2002, 4). Moreover, NAESC-SDE (2013) recently issued a policy statement based on a review of research that all children in the U.S. should have an opportunity to participate in a high quality classrooms with a comprehensive curriculum that addresses all domains important for young children.

In recent years, each state in the national has adopted State Early Learning Guidelines which reflect the importance of supporting the major domains of development. These guidelines are based in part on the seminal work of the National Education Goals Panel, (1995) which summarized the research and rationale behind each of the five domains. For additional details on each of the domains see the ELG/ELDS website.

Research has demonstrated the importance of focusing on each of these domains in early learning classrooms. Scott-Little, Kagan and Frelow (2006) summarize research on the importance of early learning classrooms supporting children's physical, language, and cognitive development as well as specific attention on children's approaches to learning. This 2006 review updates the summary produced by Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp in 1995. These authors summarize research on the importance of early learning environments that support each of the five domains of development:

- **Physical development**: Research shows the importance of early learning that emphasize the importance of motor development in children, from large motor movements that occur on the playground to small motor work required for holding a crayon or putting together puzzles to physical well-being including attention to all aspects of health (Brown et al., 2009; Grissmer et al., 2010).
- **Socio-emotional development:** Studies have shown that early learning that include emotional support and secure relationships that engender the child's acquisition of such characteristics as self-confidence and the ability to function as a member of a group. supports the importance of early attention to socio-emotional development has been conducted by Payton and colleagues (2008) who reported a positive impact of social and emotional learning for kindergarten to eighth-grade students. Raver (2002) reported that research reveals early attention to children's emotional development is critical for early school readiness. Moreover, Bogard & Takanishi's research (2005) demonstrated that social-emotional skills are related to later literacy achievement."
- **Approaches to learning**: Research has demonstrated that early learning that teachers should understand the ways children become engaged in learning so they can best enhance their engagement. Curiosity, creativity, independence, cooperativeness, and persistence are some of the approaches that enhance early learning and development (Fantuzzo, Perry, & McDermott; Mize & Ladd, 1990).
- **Language and literacy**: Communicating effectively with other children and adults and having emergent literacy experiences with diverse forms of language are fundamental elements of this dimension. Research demonstrates the critical importance of early literacy on later school success (Dickenson & Neuman, 2006).
- **Cognitive development**: Cognition and general knowledge represent the accumulation and reorganization of experiences that result from participating in a rich learning setting with skilled and appropriate adult intervention. From these experiences children construct knowledge of patterns and relations, cause and effect, and methods of solving problems in everyday life (Fischer, 1980: Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

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