

CHILDREN’S CORNER

TEACHER TERMS

Here is a list of terms we use to describe the important work we do in early education and how we describe how children play and learn. They will help you get more out of trainings and to communicate better with parents about their children and with specialists giving those children services.

A word of caution – If we want to communicate well with parents, we cannot just throw “buzz words” at them. Jargon can cause a division between parents and teachers. Take the time to explain what a term means to you and give examples of the child’s behavior that illustrate the point you want to make.

**Approaches to learning:**How children become curious about learning new things. It is also how children respond to learning situations. Curiosity about the world, initiative and problem solving, and focused attention and persistence are just a few approaches to learning teachers and families hope to foster.

**Child Development:** The process by which a child acquires skills in the areas of social, emotional, intellectual, speech and language, and physical development, including fine and gross motor skills. Developmental stages refer to the expected, sequential order of acquiring skills that children typically go through. For example, most children crawl before they walk, or use their fingers to feed themselves before they use utensils.

**Cognitive development:**How children learn to think, make decisions, and solve problems.

A teacher might say: “We want to build the children’s cognitive development, so today we conducted a science experiment, and the children tried to predict the result.”

**Constructive play:** When children use blocks, LEGOs, or other materials to make buildings or towers.

**Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP):**Teaching strategies that are based on knowledge of how young children develop and learn, what makes each child unique, and the child’s community and family culture and home language. DAP activities are neither too difficult or too easy, but just right. For example, in most cases it is developmentally appropriate to introduce a 4-year-old to the letters in his name, with the expectation that over time he will learn to write his name on his own. On the other hand, it is not developmentally appropriate to ask 4-year-olds to write letters over and over again on worksheets.

**Developmental Domains:** Term used to describe areas of a child's development, including: "gross motor development" (large muscle movement and control); "fine motor development" (hand and finger skills, and hand-eye coordination); speech and language/communication; the child's relationship to toys and other objects, to people and to the larger world around them; and the child's emotions and feeling states, coping behavior and self-help skills.

**Developmental Milestone:** A memorable accomplishment on the part of a baby or young child; for example, rolling over, sitting up without support, crawling, pointing to get an adult's attention, or walking.

**Dramatic play:**When children pretend to be someone else, such as a firefighter or doctor, and they make up scenes and dialogue.

**Environmental Rating Scales – ITERS, FCCERS, ECERS:** A research-based assessment instrument to ascertain the quality of early care and education programs. The scale is designed for classrooms and family child care programs for children ages infant- 5 years. It is used to assess the environment, program, and adult/child interactions.

**Early Intervention:** A range of services designed to enhance the development of children with disabilities or at risk of developmental delay. Early intervention services under public supervision generally must be given by qualified personnel and require the development of an individualized family service plan.

**Exploratory play:**When children discover how materials work. For example, when playing with water or sand, children explore how to fill and empty buckets.

**Environmental print:** The words that are all around us, such as store signs, a menu board, or a poster with the daily schedule.

**Inclusion:** The principle of enabling all children, regardless of their diverse abilities, to participate actively in natural settings within their communities.

**Learning Disability:** A learning disability is a neurological disorder that results from a difference in the way a person's brain is "wired." Children with learning disabilities are as smart or smarter than their peers. But they may have difficulty reading, writing, spelling, reasoning, recalling and/or organizing information if left to figure things out by themselves or if taught in conventional ways.

**Manipulative Toys:** Small toys that foster fine-motor development and eye-hand coordination, such as nesting cups, puzzles, interlocking blocks, and materials from nature.

**Physical and motor development:** How children use their bodies to make large movements with their legs and arms (gross motor) and small movements with their fingers and hands (fine motor). Children learn with their legs and arms when they run, climb, or ride a tricycle. They learn with their fingers and hands when they cut with scissors, use a pencil, or construct a puzzle.

**Print awareness:**When children understand how print works. For example, after listening to lots of stories, children notice that letters make words, words make a story, and reading goes from left to right in English.

**Quality:** Quality child care commonly refers to early childhood settings in which children are safe, healthy, and receive appropriately stimulation. Care settings are responsive, allowing children to form secure attachments to nurturing adults. Quality programs or providers offer engaging, appropriate activities in settings that facilitate healthy growth and development, and prepare children for or promote their success in school.

**School Readiness:** The state of early development that enables an individual child to engage in and benefit from first grade learning experiences. Researchers, policymakers, and advocates have described school readiness in different ways, but generally, they refer to children's development in five arenas: health and physical development; social and emotional development; approaches toward learning; language development and communication; and, cognition and general knowledge. Some policymakers and researchers also use the term "school readiness" to describe a school's capacity to educate children.

**Self-regulation:**How children learn to control their feelings and their bodies. For example, if a child wants to play with a toy her friend is using, she asks for a turn rather than grabbing it.

**Social and emotional development:** How children learn about feelings. It helps them feel good about themselves and helps them understand the feelings of other people.

Sources:

1. <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/music-math-more/12-teacher-terms-demystified#sthash.rsO85fuP.dpuf>
2. <http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/childcare-glossary>
3. http://www.ldonline.org/ldbasics/whatisld