

Wild Lilac's Commitment to Developmentally Appropriate Practice

What is Developmentally Appropriate Practice?

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) of young children requires teachers to develop connected, trusting relationships with children and families so they can understand each child within the context of his/her family unit and meet him/her where he/she is within the wide developmental continuum. When teachers know children well, they can enable each child to reach individualized goals that are both challenging and achievable. "Meeting children where they are" requires teachers to respond both to children's age and developmental status, to be attuned to them as unique individuals, and to be actively aware of the social and cultural contexts in which they live. DAP ensures that learning goals and experiences are suited to children's developmental capabilities *and* are challenging enough to promote their progress and interest.

How does Developmentally Appropriate Practice impact Wild Lilac Curriculum?

At Wild Lilac Preschool, we strive to create an emergent environment where all early learners feel reached by the curriculum our teachers present to the group. Our teachers plan curriculum based on the themes they observe arising in the children's play and conversations and these themes are reflected in the curricular activities the teachers plan. Curriculum is presented in a variety of different ways, including books, gross motor activities, circle time songs and poetry, math and science projects, and a wide and often changing variety of art and building materials. While we do not expect all curriculum materials to reach each child in a way that excites and inspires him or her, our commitment to DAP ensures that our curriculum offers every child many opportunities to be engaged in learning.

How Does Developmentally Appropriate Practice Impact Wild Lilac Teaching Methods?

In Early Childhood Education, even more important than the curricular content of any preschool program, are the moment by moment actions and interactions between the teachers and the children and between the children. At Wild Lilac, we know that the interactions between teachers and children in the innumerable "teachable moments" throughout each day are the most powerful determinant of learning outcomes and development. Curriculum is very important, but what the teacher does, does not do, says and does not say is paramount. In every interaction with every child, Wild Lilac teachers are considering the cognitive, social, and emotional impacts on the child. Wild Lilac teachers support the children's play through a coactive decision-making model which uses problem solving and group agreements to promote self-regulation and impulse control; capacities critical to later learning, social competence, and school success.