

## **Making Circle Time Meaningful**

### **What does research say about current practices and Circle Time?**

- Lasts 15-20 minutes – Based on Pedagogy of Watching
- Inconsistent Goals – content oriented to repetition and memorization
- Lack of Alignment to Standards
- Calendar Concepts such as yesterday, today, and tomorrow are not age appropriate prior to age 7

What are some strategies to support developmentally appropriate practices during Circle Time or Morning Meetings?

Chart Walk:

Picture Schedules:

Numbers:

- Replace rote counting activities with Number Sense activities
- Use numbers as *adjectives* rather than nouns.
  - Create a class sign with a question of the day for attendance...
  - Number scavenger hunts...
  - Movement by the numbers...

Patterns:

- Read books that introduce language patterns...
- Provide children active experiences with patterns...
- Model patterns
- Music and Body Movement Patterns

Toddlers and Twos:

- Stay developmentally appropriate
- Simple songs with hand and body movements
- **Short** stories with flannel boards or props
- Schedule Circle Time **after** a gross motor activity
- Have appropriate seating arrangements
- Allow an opt-out option

**Your Turn:** *write one sentence that summarizes this information*

**How do current practices compare to best and developmentally appropriate practices?**

<b>Current Practice</b>	<b>Developmentally Appropriate Practice</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lasts 15-20 minutes – Based on Pedagogy of Watching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10-15 minutes – Interactive and Hands-on</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent Goals – content oriented to repetition and memorization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear Goals with High Instructional Quality – High Language Support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Alignment to Standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear Alignment to Early Learning Standards</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calendar Concepts such as yesterday, today, and tomorrow are not age appropriate prior to age 7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time concepts such as Before, Now, Later, or Next and Then – Before and After</li> </ul>

- *Typical Preschool Circle Time lasts 15-20 min of Pedagogy of Watching – VS. 10-15 min of Interactive and Hands-on*

<b>DAP: Focus on Preschoolers (pp 67-101)</b>	<b>What could this look like in my classroom?</b>
Teachers frequently engage children in planning or in reflecting on their experiences, discussing a past experience, and working to represent it (e.g. drawing, writing, and dictating. Making pictographs). Such opportunities help the teacher learn what the children are thinking and enable children to deepen and refine their own concepts and understanding.	
Recognizing children's natural curiosity and desire to make sense of their world and gain new skills, teachers consistently plan learning experiences that children find highly interesting, engaging, and comfortable.	
Teachers help child use communication and language as tools for thinking and learning. For example, during group time teachers provide ways for every child to talk (e.g. talk to a peer, call out answers). Or teachers have children repeat aloud things they want to remember (e.g. "One plate, one spoon") or talk about what they will write before doing it.	

- Inconsistent Goals – generally involve orienting children to the day – this content lends itself to repetition and memorization – which is low instructional quality (low concept building – low language support) VS. Clear Goals with High Instructional Quality – High Language Support*

<b>DAP: Focus on Preschoolers (pp 67-101)</b>	<b>What could this look like in my classroom?</b>
Teachers engage individual children and groups in real conversations about their experiences, projects, and current events. They encourage children to describe their work products or ideas, and teachers express interest in hearing children's opinions, observations, and feelings.	
The curriculum addresses key goals in all areas of development (physical, social, emotional, cognitive) and in the domains of physical education and health, language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and creative arts.	
The curriculum, which is in written form, provides teachers with a useful and flexible framework for planning learning experiences and materials for seeing how those experiences can fit together to accomplish the program's stated goals.	

- Lack of alignment to Standards – e.g. the math that is covered in Calendar activities is not at all the math that is expected according to Early Learning Standards VS. Alignment to Early Learning Standards*

<b>DAP: Focus on Preschoolers (pp 67-101)</b>	<b>What could this look like in my classroom?</b>
The curriculum is consistent with high-quality, achievable, and challenging early learning standards and recommendations of the relevant professional organizations.	
Teachers actually refer to and use the curriculum framework as they plan what they will do with children, so classroom experiences are coherent. Teachers plan and implement experiences that help children achieve important developmental and learning goals.	
Teachers actively foster children’s understanding of whole numbers (including counting, one-to-one correspondence, and number relationships) and beginning operations (joining and separating sets), They engage children in thinking about and working with geometric/spatial relationships and manipulating two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes.	

- Children are not developmentally ready to understand the concepts and terms yesterday, today, and tomorrow until after the age of 6. They can understand past and future, but actual calendar constructs are not in place until between 7 and 10. VS. Time concepts such as Before, Now, Later, or Next and Then – Before and After*

<b>DAP: Focus on Preschoolers (pp 67-101)</b>	<b>What could this look like in my classroom?</b>
The curriculum is designed to help children explore and acquire key concepts (the “big ideas”) and tools of inquiry of each discipline in ways that are effective for preschool children.	
In later grades social studies will include more complex concepts. Preschoolers can begin learning basic concepts that help them acquire some of the foundational skills, for example, learning to use a time line of the day.	

Two things I plan to do with this information...

**Resources:**

- Beneke, Sallee J, et al. "Calendar Time for Young Children Good Intentions Gone Awry." *Young Children*, May 2008, pp. 12–16.  
<https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/pubs/calendartime.pdf>
- Copple, Carol, et al. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2013.
- Epstein, Ann S. *The Intentional Teacher: Choosing the Best Strategies for Young Childrens Learning*. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014.
- "Making Circle Time Successful." *Teachmetotalk.com*, 14 May 2014,  
<https://teachmetotalk.com/2011/02/15/making-circle-time-successful/>.
- Stewart, Deborah. "10 Tips for Circletime in the Preschool Classroom." *Teach Preschool*, 10 May 2019, <https://teachpreschool.org/2013/03/25/ten-tips-for-circletime/>.
- Maryland Early Learning Standards  
<https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/maryland-early-learning-standards>
- Maryland Early Learning Assessment <https://pd.kready.org/r4kmaryland>