"Children are not things to be molded, but are people to be unfolded"

An interdisciplinary view of child development through developmental cascades

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Acknowledgments

We begin this session by affirming our appreciation and respect for the bases and funds of knowledge and privilege that we have received and benefitted from in our lives, and that we are now honoured to share with others.

We recognize the expertise and lived experiences of each and every participant in this event today, as we come together out of a shared love for and concerned commitment to caring for and educating infants and children.

We recognize with respect the traditional custodians of the unceded land where we are gathered today, the Acjachemen (Juaneño) and Tongva (Gabrileño) peoples who first enjoyed the delightful climate, abundant resources, and refreshing natural beauty of the area.

If you wish to learn more about the original peoples who lived on and cared for the land where you live and work, you can look it up on the Native Land web site (which includes information from around the world):

https://native-land.ca/

SESSION CONTENT:

1. NAEYC: DAP, 4th ed. (2020)
2. THE TEACHER'S "IMAGE OF THE CHILD"
3. LENSES: UNFOLDING DEVELOPMENT
+ DEVELOPMENTAL CASCADES
4. TOOLS: incl. DESIRED RESULTS
DEVELOPMENTAL PORTFOLIO (DRDP)

OBJECTIVES:

Part 1: Connect DAP (3 principles + 9 considerations + the 4 changes of DAP) with teachers' image of the child

Part 2: Compare Developmental Cascades and the Image of the Child through Unfolding Development and other Perceptions of Child Development

Part 3: Utilize different Observation Tools for Children's Development
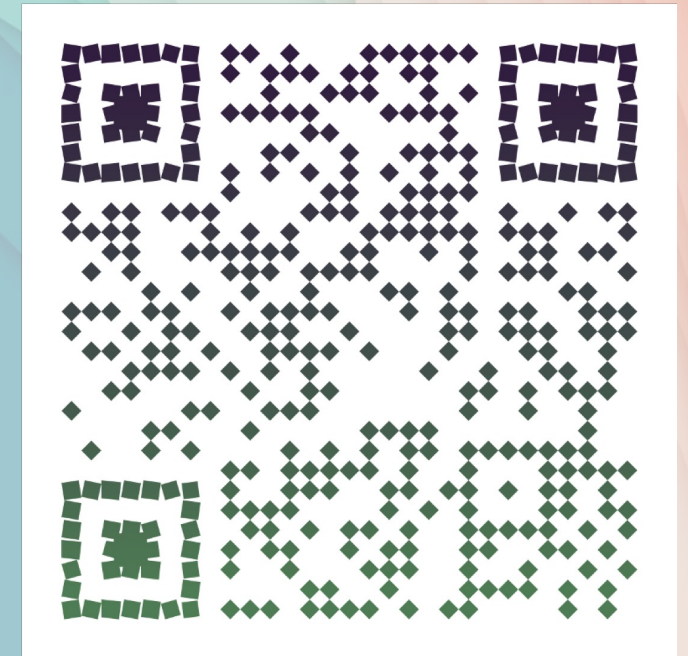
Part 4: Small but Mighty ideas

CEUs are available for this session

Through the NAEYC Learning Lab

Numerical access code will be shared at the end of this presentation

Link to main NAEYC Learning Lab page

Danielle McLellan-Bujnak

- MSc: Early Childhood Inclusive Education (Portland State University)

- Adjunct Instructor: Northern Lights College (Fort St. John, BC Canada) + North Orange Community College (Anaheim, CA)

- 20+ years as a centre-based + home-based carer-educator, 7 years as a professional development educator & researcher
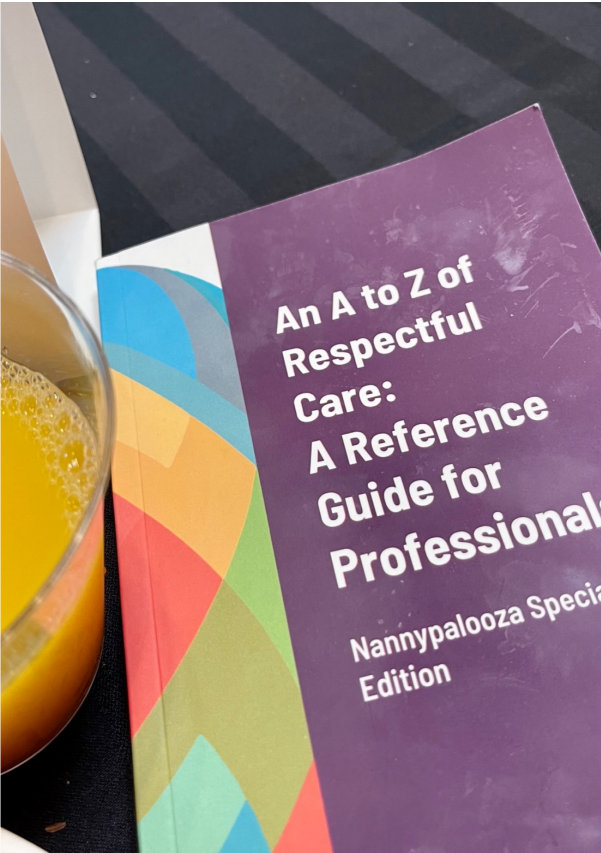
Danielle & Dr. Z

Zlata Stankovic-Ramirez

Professor of Human Development, Family Studies, & Counseling (Texas Woman's University)

PhD. Child Development & Early Education, TWU

Mama to 2 children: Daniel Milan Ramirez (10) and Lola Mila Ramirez (2)

The 5 Dimensions of Respect

1. Respect for **self**
2. Respect for **parents** and other family members involved in the care dynamic
3. Respect for **professional colleagues** involved in the care dynamic
4. Respect for **authoritative resources** such as professional standards and applicable legal regulations
5. Respect for **the child**

The first four dimensions of respect culminate in and form the resilient foundation for our respect for the person receiving care in the care partnership.

Without the first four dimensions of respect, our professional role is compromised, and we cannot enter a relationship of authentic respect for the child.

(McLellan-Bujnak 2024, iv)

What WE want to give YOU in this workshop:

Attention

Respect

Space to figure things out on your own

Time to figure things out on your own

Opportunity for "reflective practice"

(These are the very same things that we offer to the children in our care…)

What is Constructivism?

- **Knowledge is constructed through interaction** with materials and with others, and is **co-constructed by all of the participants** (not by direct instruction or passive absorption)

- This is called the "Constructivist Approach" and is the basis for many pedagogical methods, including that of Dr. Maria Montessori and of Reggio Emilia, Italy and Reggio-inspired environments around the world

- Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of **interpersonal communication and shared meaning-making** in teaching & learning experiences (and thus each person's individuality is reflected in their participation, and affects their own and others' learning)

- **Discussion, dialogue, and collaboration** are critically important components of learning - and teaching - and collaborative **reflection on experiences** extends the learning for all involved (teachers and students)

- The Constructivist Approach is an **evidence-based "better practice"** in the field of education and care and is often linked with **Jean Piaget's work** and the principles of **early relational health/relationship-based care**

(McLellan-Bujnak 2018)

What we want for YOU to BE in this course:

- flexible
- stable
- secure
- relaxed
- self-confident

(These are the very same goals we have for the children in our care… and thus this list represents some core attributes in our image of the child, and in our image of the learner)

Part 1: DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practice)

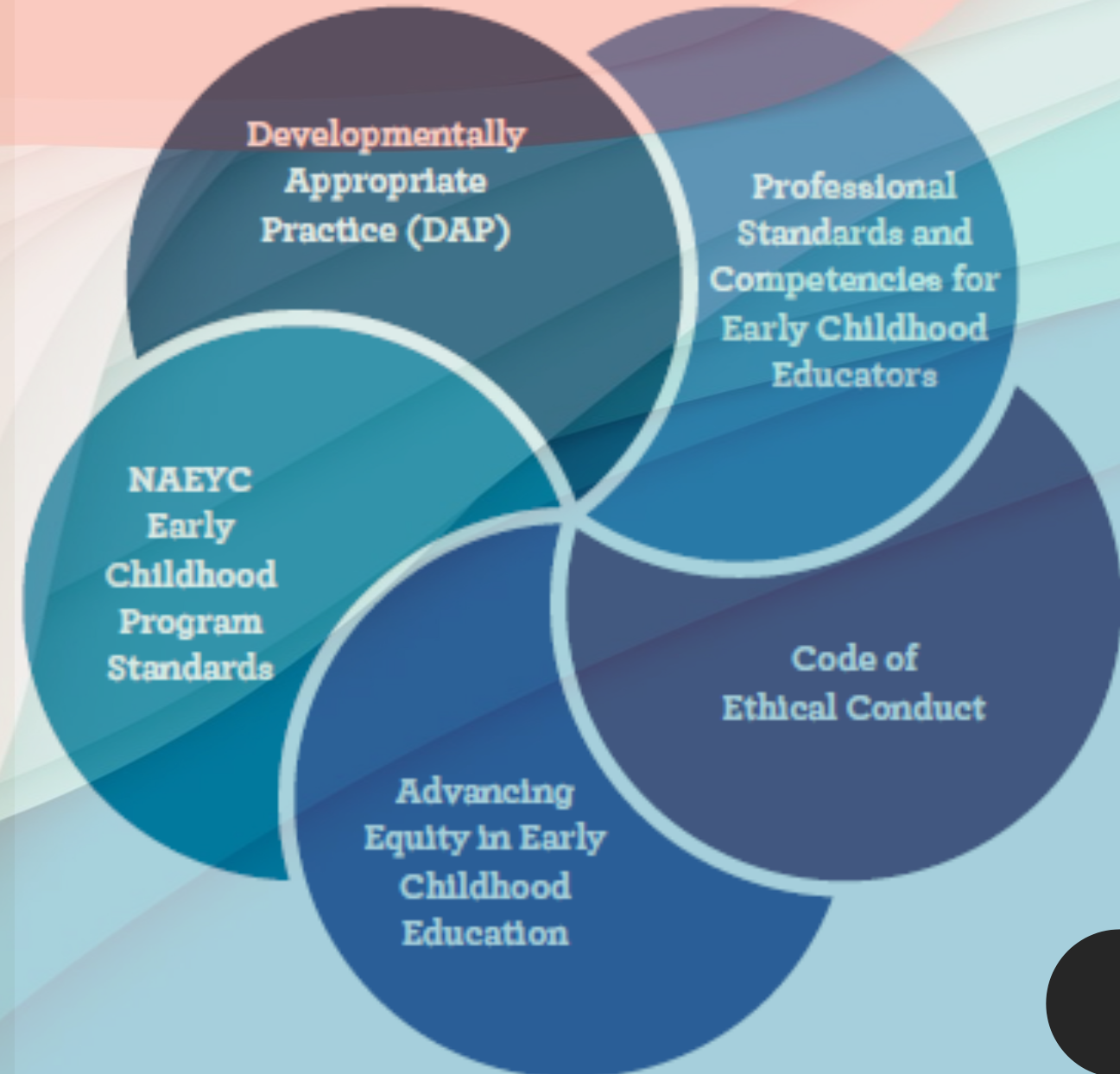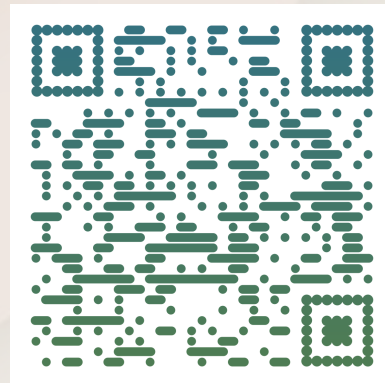## *National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*

Vision Statement: All young children thrive and learn in a society dedicated to ensuring they reach their full potential.

Mission Statement: NAEYC promotes high-quality early learning for each and every child, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

Five Documents to Consider

DAP is the framework for creating quality care and education.

Presentation links:

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)

Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards

Code of Ethical Conduct

Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education

DAP: FIRST 3 editions

1987: To resist "push down" curriculum from elementary to preschool level, and included 2 core considerations

1997: Revised to include the third core consideration to address **diversity** by including the socio-cultural context for each, Child, Educator, Program

2009: Identify "Best practice" and what is not

 Typically developing children

 Tool to assess normative instruction

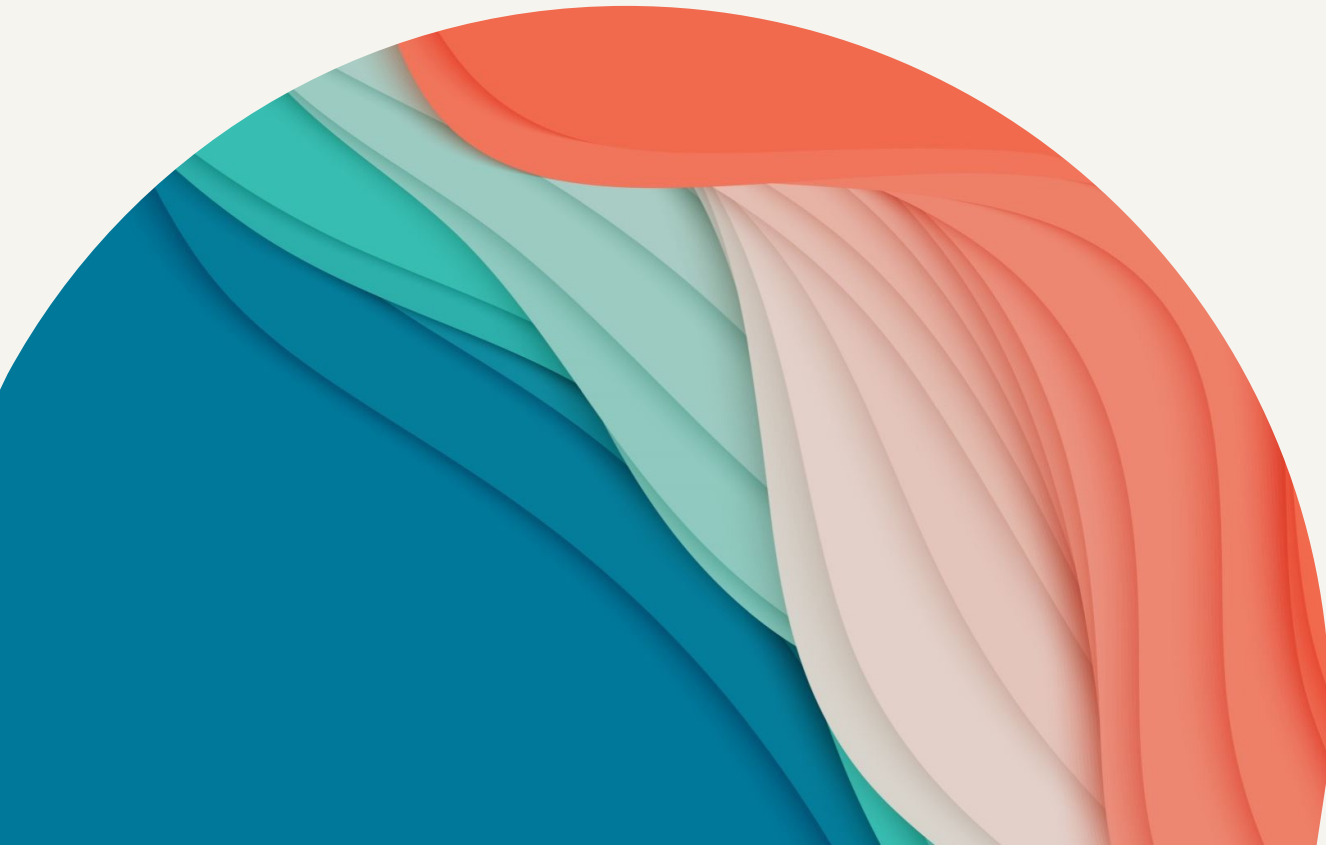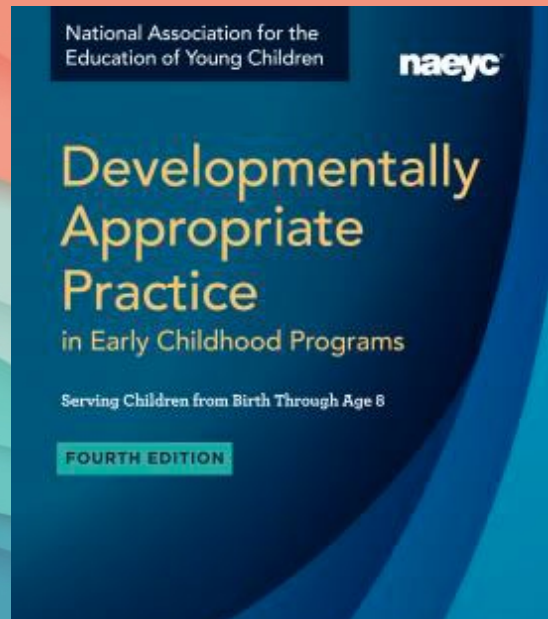 **De-emphasized cultural contexts**

 Leaned in toward "best practice" for all

Turn and Talk

When did you first hear about DAP?

How do you see DAP in your local classrooms and learning centers?

National Association for the Education of Young Children

naeyc

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

in Early Childhood Programs

Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8

FOURTH EDITION

- Major shift in emphasis, away from standards-based and towards a transformative view of the young child

- Instead of Ages and Stages, Waves and Cycles

- Reemphasizing the diversity and uniqueness of individual

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs: Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8, Fourth Edition

Advancing Equity
in Early Childhood Education

National Association for the Education of Young Children

All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have

Igualdad

Equidad

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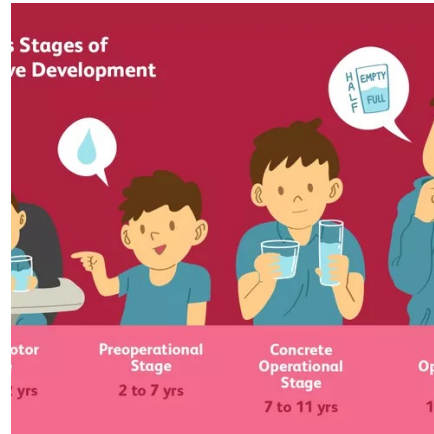
DAP IS EQUITY

EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE

"It's a mistake to try to fit children into preexisting templates, insisting that every child achieve specific milestones at specific ages."
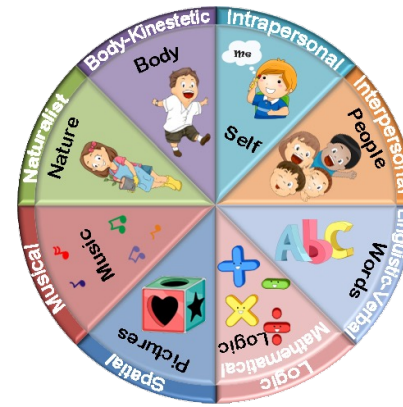
(Thompson & Stanković-Ramirez 2021, 21)
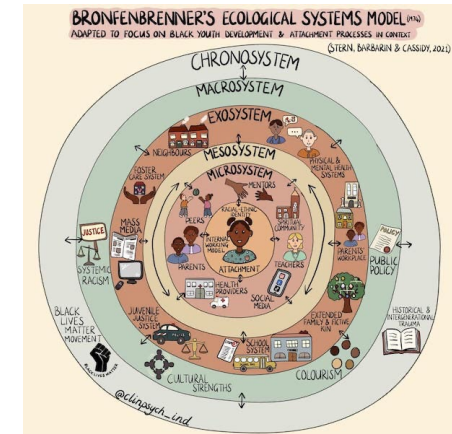
Theories of Development

Planes of Development

Montessori

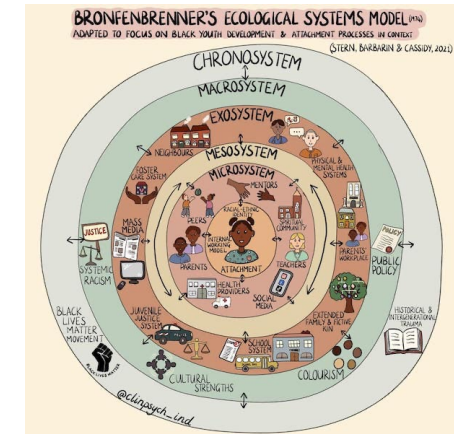**Ages and Stages**

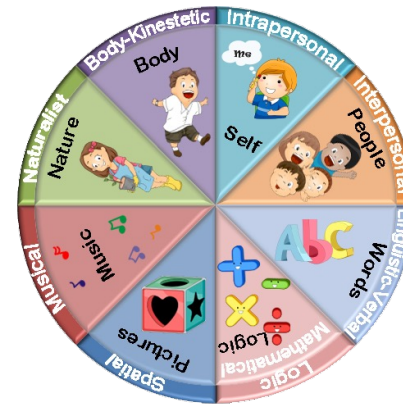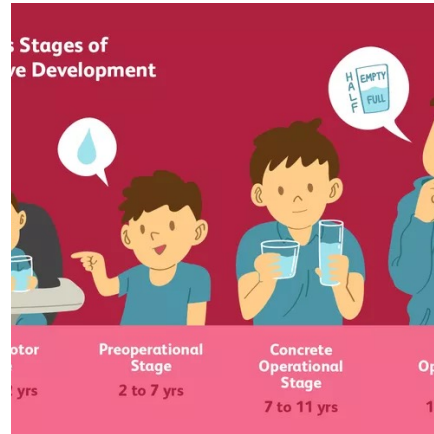Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson

Multiple Intelligences

Gardner

Ecological Systems

Bronfenbrenner

Turn and Talk

How do Theories of Development affect the way teachers think about children?

How does learning about Theories of Development help teachers change and grow?

WAVES

"The notion of 'stages' of development has limited utility; a more helpful concept may be to think of waves of development that allow for considerable overlap without rigid boundaries."

(NAEYC 2020, 10)

"The concept of stages does not accurately reflect the way development takes place … These waves consist of spurts of development interwoven with periods of little apparent growth."

(NAEYC 2022, 36)

Waves

"The waves of development, the ebb and flow of growth and processing, acquisition and reconsideration, all together map a process of typical child development, and attending to these waves empowers educators of children of all ages to go with the flow."

(Thompson & Stanković-Ramirez 2022, 5)

Follow the child.

"A simple liberating thought came to our aid, namely that things about children and for children are only learned from children."

(Malaguzzi in Edwards et al. 1998, 51)

"The child has his own laws of growth, and if we want to help him grow,

we must follow him

instead of imposing ourselves on him."

(Montessori 1989, 46)

Part 2:
Developmental Cascades

Insights from Developmental Psychology

- Society for Research in Child Development SRCD
- Masten & Cicchetti (2010)
- Oakes & Rakison (2020)
- Tamis-LeMonda & Lockman (2023)

Developmental Cascades

"A cascade, which can be used as a metaphor for thinking about development. Abilities begin at the top of the cascade and move down along different trajectories depending on which rocks and obstacles are encountered along the way. All drops of water, or developing abilities, end up in the pool below, but the particular position in the pool depends on the path traveled, which reflects the events and objects encountered along the way".

(Oakes & Rakison 2020, 103)

Developmental Cascades

"Children develop along any number of paths depending on factors such as how much freedom they are given to move, their relative size, the kind of caregiving they receive, and how language is spoken to them, and much more. It's important to not consider differences as a way to identify deficits… understand how experience influences the shape of the cascade."

(Tamis-LeMonda & Lockman 2023, CKCK)

Overlapping Waves
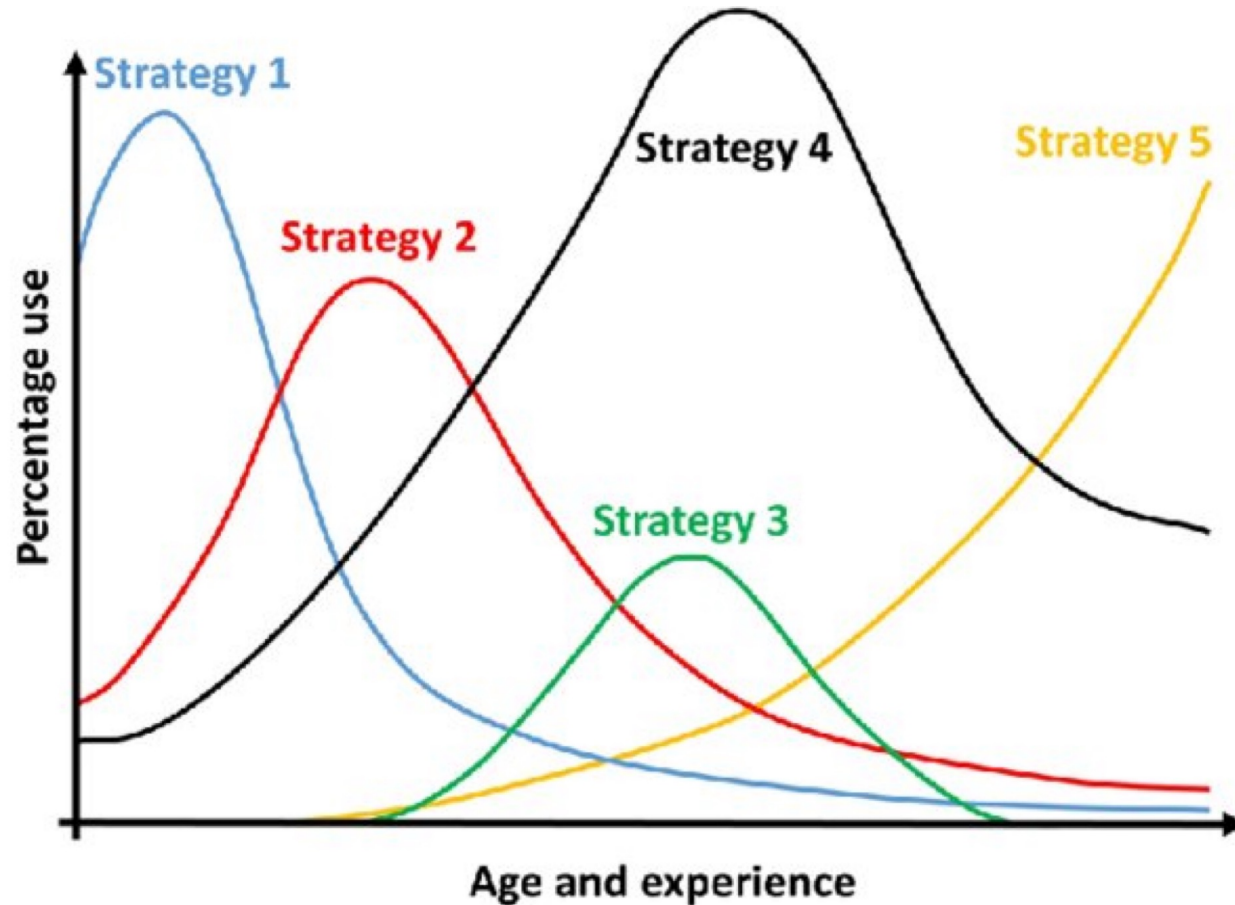
Siegler (1996)
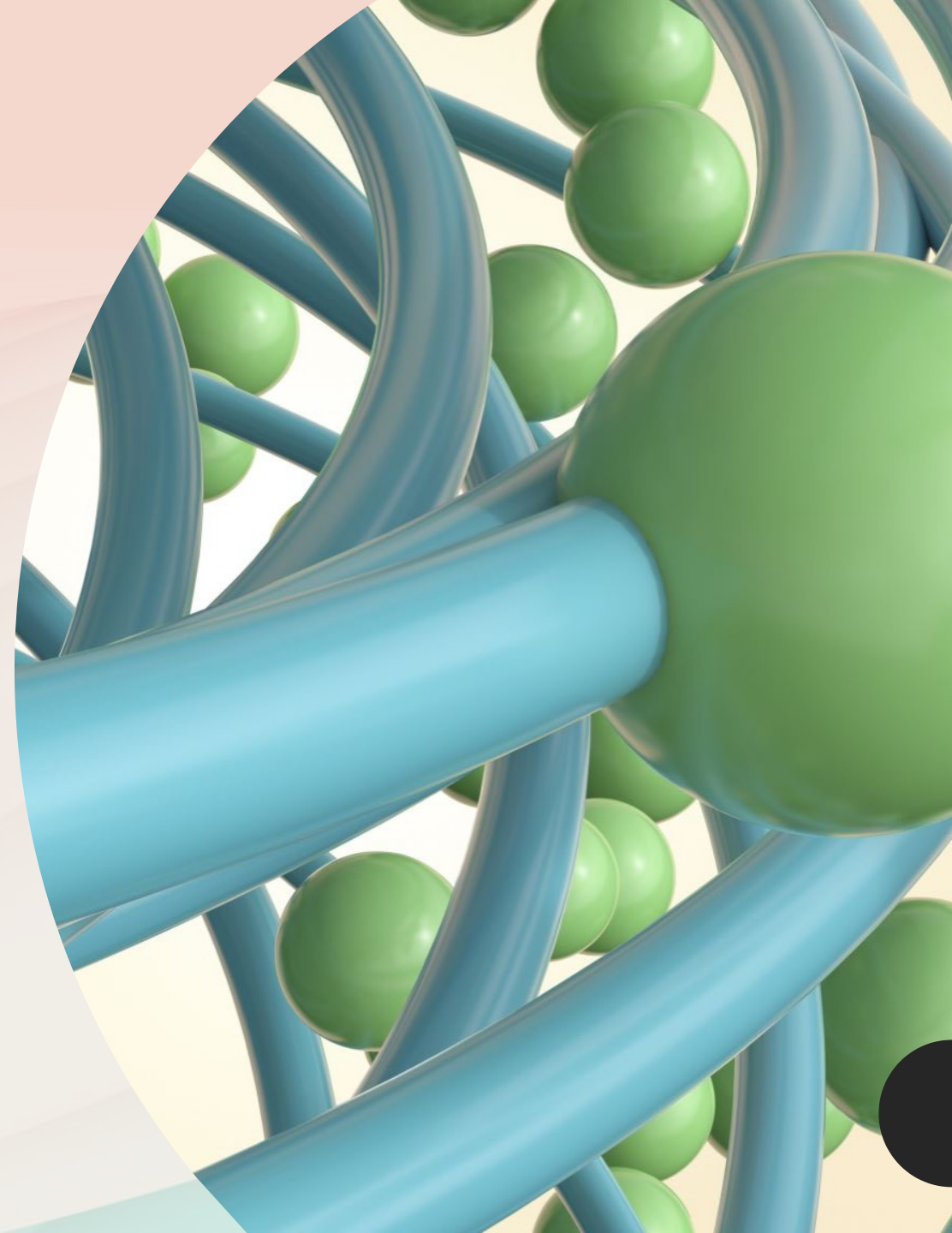
Key Tenets of Cascade Approach

✓ All developmental change reflects the use of multiple mechanisms

✓ The mechanisms of any specific developmental change operate at many levels involving sensation, perception, and cognition

✓ The emergence of any behavior or milestone represents one point in an ongoing developmental cascade

Water Play – Let's Learn THROUGH Play together (Activity)

Unfolding Development

- Infants and children go through **distinct stages of unfolding development**, each of which are predicated upon the development which occurred in the previous stage(s), and **small changes at any stage (both internally and externally) can result in dramatically different outcomes** later

- Development is multidimensional, meaning that events in different domains of development are **interrelated across domains**, as well as proceeding from prior developmental events within the same domain

- Gesell, Piaget, Montessori, Steiner and many others investigated **developmental stages** and observed children extensively in order to describe them accurately

- Modern technology, such as functional MRI, has permitted us to view these sequential stages directly, and has **validated these long-standing empirical observations**

(McLellan-Bujnak 2018)

Unfolding Development (cont'd)

"[In] this concept of unfolding development … we are **beginning with the end in mind**. We are looking forward to what will unfold later from the conditions that we are curating in the child's environment right now.

In our image of the child as competent, we not only see the competencies that the child demonstrates right now, but we also see the new competencies that can develop in the future, **based on the supports and buffers that we provide** for their experiences right now."

(McLellan-Bujnak 2024, 131)

Unfolding Development (cont'd)

"[I]n the context of unfolding development, we see that **the way we choose to change a young infant's diaper** can lay the neurological foundation for notions of before and after, for delayed gratification, and for emotional resilience.

Eventually, it **can unfold into being better able to resist peer pressure** years later when the child is in elementary, middle school and high school - and throughout their entire lifespan."

(McLellan-Bujnak 2024, 131)

Unfolding Development (cont'd)

"Children are not things to be molded, but are people to be unfolded"

(Jess Lair)

Unfolding Development is an interdisciplinary and multidimensional, constructivist lens for looking at child development holistically.

It is based on *seeing the child as a whole person* who is undergoing a natural and internally-motivated continuous sequence of growth and development which *cascades through periods of change and periods of consolidation and can follow multiple pathways*, and while internally-motivated, it is nonetheless influenced by both *external conditions and internal responses* to those conditions.

(McLellan-Bujnak 2018 & 2024)

Unfolding Development (cont'd)

As professionals, we can **integrate useful time-tested tools**, such as checklists and expected sequences of development, **within our multidimensional view** of the child's unique and personal path of healthy development, across domains and over time.

Thus we can take **snapshots of the waterfall**, which are meaningful and valid insofar as they represent **a specific moment in time** (and can suggest meaningful interventions and buffers that we can provide), but a single snapshot can never express or encompass the **complexity that is the ever-flowing developmental process** of the child.

==>> OUR EVIDENCE-BASED IMAGE OF THE CHILD...

(McLellan-Bujnak 2018)

Sample word cloud: "image of the child"

Our collective image of the child (using Menti)

Key Points of Developmental Cascades

Bidirectional Effect: Milestones influence development; development reinforce or reshape earlier skills.

Impact Across Domains: Cascades can occur within a single domain (ex: motor skills improve athleticism), or across different domains (social skills = better academic performance).

Cumulative Effect: Small successes or struggles early on can have a snowball affect over time, leading to advantages or disadvantages.

Not Predetermined: While cascades suggest a path of influence, it's not a fixed destiny. Children are adaptable, and environmental factors, interventions, and individual differences can modify the course of development.

Video:
the voices of
families matter

- Challenge: to look at the child holistically, and wonder if this is a trauma response, or an authentic delay?

What is a "Pedagogy"?

pedagogy

noun (plural **pedagogies**)

the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept

source: OxfordReference.com

Waldorf Education®, the Montessori Method, RIE®, and the Reggio Emilia approach are examples of well-known pedagogies in early childhood care and education.

Also… what we are doing here today is pegagogy!

What does "Image of the Child" mean?

Image of the child is a phrase used by educators influenced by the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood education (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002; Gandini, 1997; Scheinfeld, Haigh, & Scheinfeld, 2008).

It refers to what a person, or group of people, **believe, understand, and assume about the role of children** in education and society.

This image includes how people think about children's **capabilities, development, motivations, purpose, and agency.**

(Martalock 2012)

What does "Image of the Child" mean? (cont'd)

Social, cultural, and historical experiences influence a person's image of the child.

Everyone develops an image of the child through their experiences as part of a community and culture, as well as through what they have been taught both in school and at home (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Lancy, 2008).

People **may not be consciously aware of the image they hold**, or even recognize the beliefs and assumptions that are part of their image of the child.

(Martalock 2012)

Contrasting Interpretations of a Child's Motivation and Capability:
Differing images of the child based on differing beliefs, understandings & assumptions

Two preschool teachers, Chad and Letitia, are playing a sound-letter matching game with a child. Evan struggles to make connections between letter sounds and the beginning letters of the names of objects on the table.

One teacher, Chad, interprets this as a lack of Evan's motivation. Chad believes Evan needs more instruction and practice.

The second teacher, Letitia, notes that Evan was very carefully watching her body language. He was trying to read her subtle cues in order to pick the right answer. Evan is capable of very close observation. He noticed how Letitia tilted her head and moved forward ever so slightly when he moved his finger over the correct object. Letitia believes that Evan is very motivated to figure out how to make meaning about his interaction with his teachers.

(Martalock 2012)

Part 3:
Utilize Observation Tools through a Developmental Cascade Lens

- The lens we are using is Unfolding Development/Developmental Cascades

- The tool we are using today is DRDP (Desired Results Developmental Portfolio)

- We will watch a short video and do DRDP observations here in the session, using the handouts on your tables (DRDP pages for you to fill out)

Observe **social + physical functions** of a **toddler** and a **preschooler**:

Green + Pink handouts = Preschooler (3 years old)
Cream + Purple handouts = Toddler (1 year old)

Part 3:

Utilize Observation Tools through a Developmental Cascade Lens (cont'd): Illinois & Massachusetts

One tool the state agrees on: The Early Learning Accomplishment Profile **(E-LAP)** provides a systematic method for observing the skill development of children functioning in the birth to 36-month age- range. The purpose of this criterion-referenced assessment is to assist teachers, clinicians, and parents in assessing individual development (Illinois).

Several tools the state agrees on: AEPS-3 (An assessment and curriculum system that provides data for programs to improve outcomes for children. AEPS-3 can be used for goal setting, classroom teaching, progress monitoring, etc.) Massachusetts

Ages and Stages Questionnaire
Ages and Stages Questionnaire Social Emotional
Developmental Reading Assessment
Early Childhood Environmental Rating System (ECKERS)
Early Reading Inventory
Early Screening Inventory
Surveillance of Wellbeing of Young Children
Teaching Strategies Gold
Work Sampling System

WHAT IS THE TOOL IN YOUR STATE THAT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE TO USE WHEN OBSERVING YOUNG CHILDREN AGES 0-5?
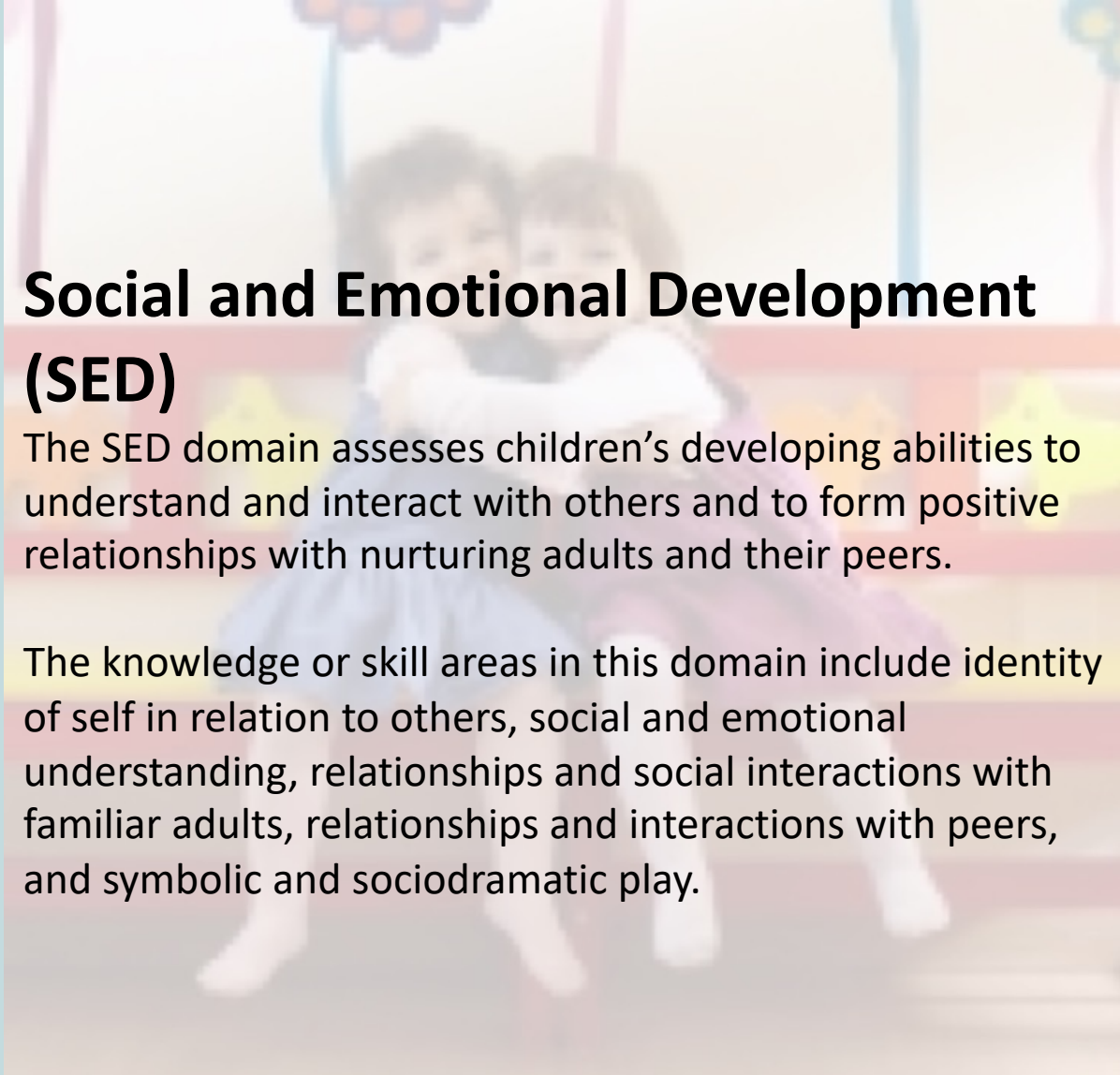
Part 3:
Utilize Observation Tools through a
Developmental Cascade Lens (cont'd)

Why we chose DRDP for our activity today:

- A **California State Dept of Ed** program, and is required in many childcare programs throughout the state (and also utilized outside of California)

- Covers children from **birth to kindergarten** age

- DRDP Assessment Tool is **available FREE OF CHARGE online**

- DRDP requires a **written anecdotal observation** or other form of documentation for each specific developmental step, and observations are made in **natural settings**

Social and Emotional Development (SED)

The SED domain assesses children's developing abilities to understand and interact with others and to form positive relationships with nurturing adults and their peers.

The knowledge or skill areas in this domain include identity of self in relation to others, social and emotional understanding, relationships and social interactions with familiar adults, relationships and interactions with peers, and symbolic and sociodramatic play.

Physical Development–Health (PD-HLTH)

The PD-HLTH domain assesses motor development and the development of routines related to personal care, safety, and nutrition.

The knowledge or skill areas in this domain include perceptual-motor skills and movement concepts, gross locomotor movement skills, gross motor manipulative skills, fine motor manipulative skills, active physical play, nutrition, safety, and personal care routines (hygiene, feeding, dressing).

Part 3:
Utilize Observation Tools through a Developmental Cascade Lens (cont'd)

Social and Emotional Development (SED) or
Physical Development–Health (PD-HLTH)

Green or Pink handouts = Preschooler (3 years old)

Cream or Purple handouts = Toddler (1 year old)

Part 4:
"Small but mighty" ideas

1. Identify some of your pain points in connecting with parents

2. Identify some of your challenges in observing children

"Small but mighty" homework:

Within the next week after you get home:

1. Connect with a parent in this one specific small but mighty way:

2. Use one aspect of this observation tool in a small but mighty way:

3. One small but mighty question you can ask a colleague about your identified pain point:

Top Four takeaways:

1. DAP tells us that children are alike, and are different/unique, and the context (culture) of their experiences of living, growing & developing matters

2. The idea of Developmental Cascades INVITES us to continue refining our image of the child on an ongoing, lifelong basis

3. Unfolding development is a research-based perspective that views the child in a dynamic, multidimensional, holistic way as they unfold throughout their lives and through recognizable "milestones"

4. Unfolding development also means that we can enrich existing knowledge (eg stages and checklists) by interweaving both current and time-tested research-backed techniques, redefining better practice for all who work with or on behalf of young children

One final question:

Does the way you view the child's development impact the way you connect with the child?

YES... THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT DEVELOPMENT

DOES AFFECT

THE WAY WE CONNECT WITH CHILDREN

THANK YOU
for co-constructing
this learning &
teaching
experience
with us today!

CO-LAB
Collaboration of 9 research scholars: international, multi-disciplinary

Catalina Murcia, Casa de Paz Montessori, Dallas

Daniela Uribe Montserrat, Tecnológico de Monterrey

Danielle McLellan-Bujnak, Respectful Care® for Nannies & NCS

Mary Harper, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Josh Thompson, Texas A&M University-Commerce

Marta Mercado-Sierra, Texas Woman's University

Melissa Heinrich, The University of Texas at Dallas

Rachael Rose, Texas Woman's University

Zlata Stankovic-Ramirez, Texas Woman's University

THANK YOU!
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Cascades in Development

References & Suggested Further Reading

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Questions?
Thoughts?

Presentation links:
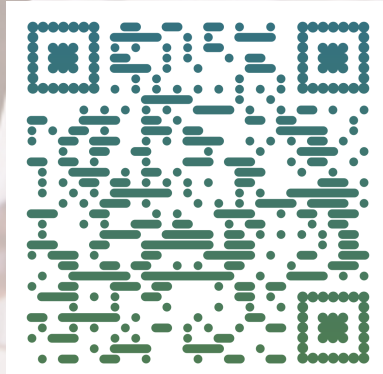
Assessment to Earn CEUs

Use this code to access and complete an assessment in *NAEYC Learning Lab*.

You have until **48 hours** after the conclusion of the conference to access and complete the assessment.

Note: CEUs not issued after the assessment is closed.

Access Code:

6294

Link to NAEYC Learning Lab:

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LearningLab