# Reflection Questions for Teacher Inquiry Groups Using *Casebook: Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*

## Part 1: Creating a Caring, Equitable Community

### 1.1 Missed Opportunities: Relationship Building in Inclusive Classrooms (Infant/Toddler)

1. What opportunities to support peer relationships have you overlooked in your own work? What steps could you take to more readily recognize and respond to these opportunities?

2. In what circumstances have you fostered relationship building, and what strategies did you use? How did the children respond?

3. Observe the children you work with. Can you identify strategies children themselves use to connect with their peers? In what ways could you build on these strategies?

### 1.4 Counting Collections in Community (Kindergarten)

1. What are some ways you can be more intentional about integrating social and emotional goals into your curriculum? During which subjects or times of the day might you choose to start with?

## Part 2: Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families and Fostering Community Connections

### 2.2 Healthy Boundaries: Listening to Children and Learning from Families (Infant/Toddler)

1. In your own experience, have you ever noticed behaviors in children similar to Lily's? What has been your response?

2. What information about a child might a teacher learn from family members that would not be easily observed in the program setting?

## Part 3: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Children's Development and Learning

### 3.1 Pairing Standardized Scale with Observation (Infant/Toddler)

1. What do you think "significant progress" looks like for children with moderate to severe developmental delays?

2. How would you address developmental progress when talking with families about their expectations for children's development and learning?

3. How do you help families set realistic expectations for progress without destroying their hopes and dreams?

4. How will you use informal data when meeting with families and educators at a transition of service meeting?

## 3.2 The Power of Observing Jordan (Infant/Toddler)

1. How could you as a toddler teacher meaningfully involve a child's family in all three steps of the informal assessment process?

2. What are the differences between what a parent observes about their child and what you observe?

3. How can you use a family's observations to capture their child's development and developmental changes?

4. What are the important elements or ideas learned from assessments that you share at family-teacher meetings?

5. How can you use assessment information to structure conversations with families and avoid bias during your meetings?

6. Which transitions seem to be the most challenging for the toddlers you work with and for you? What is important to observe about these transitions?

7. What strategies do you use to invite families to share their observations, joys, and concerns about their toddler with you? What other strategies might you try?

8. In addition to your current practices, what steps can you take to partner with families of varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds?

## 3.3 "But What Is My Child Learning?" (Preschool)

1. How can you meaningfully involve a young preschooler's family in all three steps of the informal assessment process?

2. Cultural expectations affect what children are expected to learn and how they demonstrate their knowledge. How can you address families' differing beliefs about how early learning settings should facilitate the acquisition of foundational knowledge and skills?

3. What language and examples might you use to explain to families and others in more detail the advantages of a play-based program over a more direct instructional style? How can your program leader prepare and support you to do this effectively?

4. What routines, practices, and program supports are key to using formative assessment effectively to support each child's learning?

5. What program supports are key to helping you incorporate ongoing reflective practice into your work? What factors influence the feasibility of various structured program-level options?

## 3.4 Drawing and Dialogue: Using Authentic Assessment to Understand Children's Sense of Self and Observe Early Literacy Skills (Preschool)

1. Ms. Kim feels the need to engage with Jaime's family and to describe Jaime's feelings around the separations in the family. What is the best way to begin this type of conversation with the family? What are your own experiences around this or similar conversations with a child's family?

2. In your program or in those you have observed, what early literacy assessment information is collected and shared with families? How well does this process provide the information that you need?

## 3.5 The ABCs of Kindergarten Registration: Assessment, Background, and Collaboration Between Home and School (Kindergarten)

1. Reflect on the effective practices used to help promote kindergarten registration found in this case study. What additional strategies have you, or might you, use to help promote the importance of school registration?

2. In what ways does your school support children and families with the school registration process?

3. What data components were particularly helpful in preparing the learning environment for this particular child? Which components have you found to be helpful or not helpful in your own work?

## 3.6 Creating Opportunities for Individualized Assessment Activities for Biliteracy Development (Grade 1)

1. Why are families' linguistic and cultural backgrounds an important source of data to include in your assessment to understand children's language and literacy development?

2. How can you create additional opportunities for families to be involved in children's learning during family conferences, in classroom activities, and other ways?

3. Why are children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds critical to include in your assessment practices to create a holistic evaluation and improve academic success?

## 3.7 Observing Second-Graders' Vocabulary Development (Grade 2)

**Introduction to Reflection Questions**

This case is designed to explore ways to be more intentional and individualized in vocabulary teaching. Standardized tests of reading in the primary grades typically include subtests measuring children's developing vocabulary. While these vocabulary scores are helpful in benchmarking overall growth, they do not provide the more nuanced information needed to adjust curriculum—especially in second grade, when phonics instruction shifts to fostering morphemic knowledge. Current classroom reading research is turning attention again to our need to know how the English language's structure influences early years' instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, and vocabulary. The research also clearly points to directly teaching morphemes in the primary grades as foundations for building robust vocabularies.

Early childhood educators know full well that vocabulary knowledge increases when children are exposed to new words in appropriate, relevant ways. Moreover, we recognize how new words stick when children have real reasons to use them, and to use them repeatedly. Providing child-centered opportunities for children to explore how words are put together—not only what they mean—is a necessary shift if we're to teach vocabulary to last a lifetime. Yet we can't make this shift without knowing more about children's baseline morphemic knowledge and how it relates to the vocabulary of our curricula. This case is designed as an exemplary way to authentically collect morphemic knowledge data in your classroom. As you review the case, consider the following:

1. The teacher in this case, Alex, is adding a few new tools and elements to her practice: the word jars, the focused inclusion of morphemic knowledge-building in her unit plan, and the observational notetaking and checklist tracking of children's particular word attack skills. Reflect on your current unit planning approach. What data about your children's vocabularies do you use in planning your units? What data do you now realize you need to collect somehow? What assessment instruments and other tools might you incorporate into your practice to learn more about how children acquire new words?

2. Alex's standardized assessment data confused her at first, which isn't unusual. Think about the standardized and other grade-level instruments you currently use to learn about your children's vocabularies. What information do they give you about each child? Think also about the correlations between the specific vocabulary you're required to teach at your grade level and that being assessed by those tools. Are there any gaps that need to be addressed? With whom should you collaborate to resolve these issues? What professional development opportunities would help you and your teaching team work more effectively with the vocabulary data being collected as you develop curriculum units?

### 3.8 Writing Isn't the Only Way! Multiple Means of Expressing Learning (Grade 3)

1. Consider an upcoming unit you are planning to teach. Reflect on the way teachers have traditionally measured what children learned as a result of this type of unit. What is most essential for children to know, be able to do, and understand from this unit? Describe the tasks teachers usually use to assess children's learning. Identify possible alternatives for each task.

2. Giving children options for showing their learning beyond the planned assessment can sometimes cause disagreement among staff in schools, especially at higher grade levels. How might you persuade your colleagues of the importance of giving children multiple means of representing their skills and understandings?

## Part 4: Teaching to Enhance Each Child's Development and Learning

### 4.2 Tumbling Towers with Toddlers: Intention and Decision Making over Blocks (Infant/Toddler)

1. What does it mean to optimally support children? How can you help children support one another?

2. When children are exploring materials, what is an ideal level of intervention? Describe your typical rhythm of moving back and forth between close-up scaffolding and more distant observation. Where is this working for you?

3. Think about your own classroom, the community of children with whom you work—where are they now? Where do they need scaffolded support? Are there any places where scaffolding looks like stepping back and/or interacting more? What might you try out?

## Part 5: Planning and Implementing an Engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals

### 5.1 Using the Environment and Materials as Curriculum for Promoting Infants' and Toddlers' Exploration of Basic Cause-and-Effect Principles (Infant/Toddler)

1. What kinds of observational tools have you found effective for documenting very young children's play and experimentation with objects in their environment?

2. As you work with children who are not yet verbal, what other clues might you rely on for your observations and data collection?

### 5.2 Social Play Connections Among a Small Group of Preschoolers (Preschool)

1. What are your memories of learning to make friends when you were a young child? What did you find easy about making friends, and what did you find challenging? How might these memories apply to inquiry work on play, socialization, and friendship?

2. In this case, the author describes some of the strategies she used to facilitate the children's play. In doing an inquiry project, how much do you consult with colleagues to think of new strategies to use with children to develop their socialization skills and strengthen their friendships?

### 5.3 Can Preschoolers Code? A Sneak Peek into a Developmentally Appropriate Coding Lesson (Preschool)

1. How much do your personal experiences using technology influence your thinking about effective ways to introduce and support children's understanding of technology in general and coding specifically?

2. When have you observed instances of children engaging with each other and with teachers in terms of problem solving with technological tools? How might your understanding of the role of play and discovery help support children in these instances?

### 5.4 Everyday Gifts: Children Show Us the Path—We Observe and Scaffold (Preschool)

1. Discuss observational goals and tools you might use to see and hear the direction and underlying passion of children's spontaneous play.

2. How can observing and discussing children's spontaneous play strengthen your understanding of important developmental forms and functions of play for children beyond your planned activities?

### 5.5 Learning to Conquer the Slide Through Persistence and Engaging in Social Interaction (Preschool)

1. Consider ways to understand and support children with hidden and more readily apparent disabilities. How do you observe these children for the strengths and talents they use in their play and social interactions?

2. Consider the way the teacher in the case study uses language, materials, and nonverbal communication to support Daisy. How might you provide additional strategies to support this child's persistence in both physical movement and social interaction?

### 5.6 "Sabes que todos los caracoles pueden tener bebés? Do You Know that All Snails Can Have Babies?" Supporting Children's Emerging Interests in a Dual Language Preschool Classroom (Preschool)

1. One of the most underutilized and yet effective ways to support young children's emerging interests is to provide opportunities for them to interact with older children. If you are working in a mixed-age early childhood setting or your early childhood program is near a school with older children, consider how mixed-age interactions can help foster new connections, both socially and in terms of content and dual language use. How could you begin to provide these opportunities for children?

2. As you observe children's interests in science and nature topics, what kinds of developmentally appropriate supports might they benefit from in terms of social interaction and discussion with other children, as well as with your direct scaffolding?

1. Reflect on the value of using visuals, such as the "We Are Critical Readers" poster pictured in the case study, that help children focus as a community on issues and content of critical importance to them. Share any visuals that you use with children, and brainstorm ideas for creating new kinds to support children as critical thinkers and actors.

2. In what instances have you or other adults considered children too young or unable to understand experiences and events around racism and race? Brainstorm and share teaching goals and strategies for using inquiry to strengthen your understanding of new ways to support children's discussion of and engagement with race and racism as a learning community.

# Part 6: Demonstrating Professionalism as an Early Childhood Educator

## 6.1 Take a Chance on Coaching: It's Worth It!

1. What have been your experiences with coaching in your life (e.g., sports coaching, life coaching, professional coaching)? In what ways was it a positive experience? Are there things you wish had been done differently?

2. What is the value of getting an outside perspective from a coach or mentor in a relationship that lasts over a period of time?

3. How do you seek out someone to coach or mentor you? What are some qualities or characteristics you might look for in a potential coach or mentor?

4. When in your professional career have you wished you had someone by your side supporting you and your practice? What now might lead you to seek out a coach? Is it a new curriculum, a new age group, a new role, a new set of issues affecting the classroom community?

5. Many publicly funded programs come with the expectation of working with a coach assigned to you without your involvement. How can you get the most out of a required coaching relationship even when the coach might be bringing a very different perspective to your classroom?

6. How might you advocate for yourself and your needs within an assigned coaching relationship? You know what you respond best to and what you would like to work on professionally. How might you help to co-create the coaching relationship you want?

7. In what ways are you, or could you be, a mentor to other educators?

## 6.2 It Started with a Friendship Parade

1. How do you, like the author, put yourself alongside children and become a curious learner with them? How might you do this in new ways?

2. How might you make room for the gifts and talents of children and pull from their ideas in your classroom planning?

3. How might you nurture empathy for the many ways that children (and adults) explore and learn?

4. The author had to let go of ideas about right answers. In what ways do you do this? How might you work toward doing more of this?

5. In what ways can you foster a collaborative community by listening to children's words and actions?

6. How did the author assess for learning? How does this compare with your own methods? What are you taking away from the author's experience?

7. How can you make space for wonder and the magic of children's thinking while remaining asset based and allowing time for reflection?

## 6.3 The World Outside of the Classroom: Letting Your Voice Be Heard

1. How have you been able to speak up for your needs as an educator? For the needs of the children you educate?

2. How can you connect with organizations like NAEYC to advocate for your needs?

3. What other types of resources in your community, online, and in print could you connect with to advocate for your needs?

# Part 7: Supporting Children with Disabilities and Implementing Inclusive Practices

## 7.2 Eli Goes to Preschool: Inclusion for a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Preschool)

1. What NAEYC resources could the teachers in the case study use to foster a more inclusive learning environment? What other types of resources in the community, online, and in print could they use? What about professional development?

2. How do the teachers' modifications of activities relate to developmentally appropriate practices? What more would you do in this classroom to support all learners?

## 7.3 Preschool Classroom Supports and Embedded Interventions with Coteaching (Preschool)

1. What 'one thing' could you do to make the biggest difference for children's progress and achievement at the moment?

2. How do you gather the evidence you need to see if your intervention is working?

3. Are there any nonnegotiables roles in a coteaching classroom? If so, what are they?

## 7.4 Addressing Challenging Behavior Using the Pyramid Model (Preschool)

1. What might you try to do differently in your teaching practice (including changes to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and classroom expectations) to support children's emotional and social development and prevent challenging behaviors?

2. How do you balance intensive interventions for one child with the universal supports you provide for all children?

## 7.5 Is There a Disability? How Teachers Can Be the First to Help (Kindergarten)

1. What are effective ways to learn and understand about the cultures and languages of the children in your classroom and school?

2. Who in your school might be able to support you as you seek to learn more about assessing and teaching a child who may have a disability?

3. How can you engage families with your teaching?

## 7.6 Adapting and Modifying Instruction Using Reader's Theater (Grade 2)

1. What are some ways to adapt instructional materials or instructional practices without lowering expectations for children?

2. What indicators might you look for to see if your adaptations are helping to create the desired results?

3. What resources might you use to learn to design lessons using the principles of universal design for learning?

## 7.7 Supporting Children with Learning Disabilities in Mathematics: The Importance of Observation, Content Knowledge, and Context (Grade 3)

1. Reflect on your assessment practices. Do they inform IEPs? In what way?

2. Review the learning evaluations of a child with an identified disability and see if there are missing skills on the trajectory or any splinter skills (specific abilities, sometimes seen in children who are identified as having autism spectrum disorder, that are disconnected from the usual developmental trajectory). One example is a child having a very high level of understanding of statistics but not able to use that skill in a meaningful context or purpose. How might you address any of your findings?

# Part 8: Supporting Dual Language Learners and Respecting Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

## 8.1 Facilitating a Child's Transition from Home to Group Care Through the Use of Cultural Caring Routines (Infant/Toddler)

1. In what ways do you demonstrate your understanding of and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity to children and families? What additional approaches or strategies could you try?

2. What strategies or specific activities might you use to build a positive, secure attachment with young children?

## 8.2 Engaging Dual Language Learners in Conversation to Support Translanguaging During a Small Group Activity (Preschool)

1. In what ways can you engage in the "pedagogy of listening" to respect and facilitate children's diverse ways of communicating their ideas and needs?

2. Young children benefit from integrated learning experiences across content areas and in various contexts to better understand and reinforce concepts, as noted in NAEYC's position statement on developmentally appropriate practice. How could you create these integrated learning opportunities to help enhance dual language learners' learning and understanding of concepts in two languages?

## 8.3 Incorporating Children's Cultures and Languages in Learning Activities (Kindergarten)

1. How do you help children gain knowledge and respect for similarities and differences across cultures?

2. How might you encourage children and their families to use their home languages at home and at school?

## 8.4 Adapting Teaching Materials for Dual Language Learners to Reflect Their Home Languages and Cultures in a Math Lesson (Grade 1)

1. When you, as an adult, are learning a new subject or skill, how do familiar items or examples support your comprehension and retention of new information? How does your insight into your own learning process help to inform your teaching?

2. When you consider the collection of familiar items used to teach addition in this case study, how might you use them to extend children's learning of other math skills? How might you use those same materials to support learning in other domains, such as literacy or social and emotional?

3. What are some other examples of learning materials you might include that connect with each child's home and culture?

4. Many curriculum models assume all children in a class will learn a needed concept or skill using the same materials. How much flexibility is allowed by your school or by your curriculum for you to adapt materials to be more relatable for individual children? How and where can you learn more about what is acceptable or recommended?

5. It may seem like a lot of time and work to develop collections of culturally relevant materials for many different lessons. How might you share the work by establishing a resource-sharing system to collaborate with colleagues in your building, district, or community to gather materials and generate creative ideas for customizing for individual children and building them into effective lesson plans?

## 8.6 Respecting Diverse Cultures and Languages: Sharing a Favorite Poem, Song, or Story of an Individual from Another Culture and Language (Grade 3)

1. How can you best prepare children for the process of interviewing someone who speaks another language? For the sharing of interview content in the class?

2. What else might you consider before assigning this interview activity as homework?

3. How might you respond to children or families who don't know anyone to interview and don't feel comfortable interviewing a stranger from the teacher's list?

4. When have you noticed adults and/or children code-switching in school and in the broader community? Why do you think this is so common, and how does it affect teaching?