

Free essay on effective pre k and kindergarten teachers

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“ Effective Pre K and Kindergarten teachers understand children’s cognitive development and promote cognitive skills.” In Jean Piaget’s theory of development, that stage that deals with pre-k and kindergarten is called the “ Sensorimotor Stage.” This stage lasts from birth until two years of age. As a baby, children do not understand about the world. For example, when something is out of a child’s sight they assume it no longer exists. It takes a while for children to realize things and people have a life outside of the child’s vision. Also during this stage a child’s motor skills begin developing according to the world as they see it. This phase is known as “ Object Permanence.” This phase is important to the child cognitive growth. According to interpretations of Piaget’s work the phase of object permanence replaces the idea that things only exist when her or she sees them is a development that happens as the child matures. Successful pre-k and kindergarten teachers know that the developmental stages of babyhood and early learning, students are important. The high quality teachers will be thoroughly trained in the developmental stages of children’s rational development and will work to stimulate cognitive skills. Piaget’s stages of cognitive development include what experts term “ Substages of the Sensorimotor Stage.” The substages of the sensorimotor stage have been broken down into six parts. Substage one is called “ Reflexes” and is the stage a baby goes through the first two months of life. The “ Reflexes” substage is when the baby only knows about things by physical reactions to his or her environment and by basic motor skills a baby is born with. At about one month old the baby enters a “ Primary Circular Reactions” substage in which the baby begins an awareness of his or her surroundings.

This stage is characterized by more deliberate activity such as thumb sucking. Between the ages of four months and eight months, the baby experiences the “ Secondary Circular Reactions” substage. The baby begins to look around at his or her environment. The baby will also begin to take actions to cause a response deliberately. At approximately eight to twelve months, the substage called “ Coordination of Reactions” takes place. The child begins to take more specific deliberate actions during this substage. Additionally the child begins to combine actions and an understanding of cause and effect. It is vital that the pre-k and kindergarten teachers understand that at this age children are allowed to explore their environment and may begin to imitate behaviors they witness. The “ Tertiary Circular Reactions” substage lasts from about age twelve months until eighteen months. This substage is characterized by experimentation. Children demonstrate creative thinking during this substage. They interact with people and objects. The behaviorist Piaget noted that this experimentation is a trial-and-error type of behavior. A well-trained pre-k and kindergarten teacher might notice that children at this age will also experiment on the teacher, possibly by testing out their vocal cords as an attention-seeking behavior. The “ Early Representational Thought” also known as “ Mental Representation” substage continues from approximately eighteen months old until two years old. This is fundamentally important period when good teachers can make a huge difference. At this age a child starts making the all-important realization that symbols can be used to represent things. Children learning symbols is an advanced developmental phase. The teacher knows that children in this substage should be learning to about things that

will later lead to developing reading and math skills. In her article, “Supporting Cognitive Development in Early Childhood,” Susan Landry explains how good pre-k and kindergarten teachers are familiar with research studies indicating that literacy and other cognitive skills benefit from early childhood education. Students who begin working with teachers on literacy, including phonics and math skills early learn from interacting with other children and teachers. Having the advantage of an excellent kindergarten and pre-school teachers is important in order to stimulate cognitive motor skills. Landry calls this teaching approach “ scaffolding” in which the teachers works to demonstrate the way things work to a young child. Scaffolding is the process whereby the teacher leads students onward and upward to topics that are more robust. These well-trained teachers afford continuous teaching care so that students achieve skills that are more advanced. In the YouTube videos about Piaget’s cognitive theory the teachers use scaffolding techniques, for example counting the number of coins on a table. Piaget’s theory involved teachers who were high quality. The only way a pre-k or kindergarten teacher can be successful is by being completely trained. A child’s program to stimulate their intellectual development is not a matter of how many materials are available to him or her. It is about the quality of what is available. Additionally the teacher needs to be aware that a child’s brain is still growing during the kindergarten years. By the first and second grade a child’s thinking is different than it was when the child was two or three years old. NAEYC (2009) take the position “ to promote excellence in early childhood education” by using developmentally appropriate practices. The organization warns that student

populations are up while finding is down. Their first paper on the subject was issued in 1996. Since then the educational system has changed. There is an increased demand for high quality early childhood educators. Their position calls the need for effective pre-k and kindergarten teachers as crucial. The paper references Piaget's work on children and intelligence. The report states that there are very young children suffering the ill effects of poverty, language barriers, disabilities, and a chaotic nation-wide educational system. The lack of standardization needs to be addressed immediately and state-to-state differences in educational materials and teaching systems needs to be rectified. John Santrock (2008) A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development offer new teachers a great deal of material that can help them address developmentally appropriate practices. In this work teachers can find a database of materials. It is difficult for some teachers to narrow down the search and find time to do their homework. This is where a book like Santrock's is useful. Often, teachers are obliged to sift through a large amount of materials and information. Santrock offers curriculum recommendations and useful material by age group. Loraine Dunn and Susan Kontos (1997) promote developmentally appropriate practices because of the over-whelming research studies that this teaching style gets excellent results. Research indicates that developmentally appropriate practices offer a child the advantage of increased cognitive skills plus socialization. Children respond better to environments in which they have classmates. These children have better motor skills and higher self-esteem. Unfortunately, developmentally appropriate practices are less common then they should be. It is demanding for teachers, especially when they do not get

support from parents. This means teachers need to work to instill confidence in student's parents and enthusiasm for the ideas of developmentally appropriate practices. By investing some time educating parents as well as students a teacher can have allies in the home. Developmentally appropriate practices have huge amounts of research behind it and continue to be researched and developed. It is important that parents understand a child's mental health is important as well as their learning skills, and these all develop within a framework of high quality teaching care (Dunn and Kontos, 1997).

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