Participant Handouts
Foundations of Project Construct

Module 1:
The Young Child and the Learning Environment
Reflect on Your Core Values as an Early Childhood Professional

Directions: Pick Your Core Values 1st red, 2nd Yellow, 3rd Blue, 4th Green

- BEAUTY
- ACADEMIC COMPETENCE
- LEARNING
- RELATIONSHIPS
- INDEPENDENCE
- INTERDEPENDENCE
- JOY
- CONTROL
- RESPECT
- MANNERS
- LITERACY
- COMMUNICATION
- TEST SCORES
- SAFETY
- CLEANLINESS
- PARENT PARTNERSHIPS
- CREATIVITY
- SELF AWARENESS
- CONFIDENCE
- EXPLORATION
- CULTURAL AWARENESS
- OTHER
Defining Your Core Values

Define your core values.

How do they impact your teaching and your classroom community?

Define or evaluate your school’s current philosophy of how children learn?

What changes do you need to make to align your teaching style and classroom environment with your center’s philosophy?
Adding up Your Classroom Schedule

Think about your classroom schedule and how many minutes children spend doing each of the following types of activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Total Minutes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher-directed small-group activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside play</td>
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<td>Free-choice activity</td>
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Amount of time children spend in your classroom

After recording the total number of minutes for each activity, think about the demands on each child. What percentage of the total minutes spent in the classroom is spent on activities chosen by adults? What percentage is chosen by the child?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adult chooses how child spends time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child chooses how to spend his/her time</td>
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</table>

Is your schedule balanced and developmentally appropriate for the children? Is it adult or child centered?
Assessing Environments for Developing Social Emotional Skills

Using the center floor plan, code it in the following way.

Put a 1 in all of the places where families, and children can see their interests and lives reflected.

Put a 2 in all the places where staff, families and visitors can see what the children have been doing in the program.

Put a 3 in all of the places where children can explore materials of interest to them alone.

Put a 4 in all of the places where children can explore materials of interest to them alone.

Put a 5 in all of the places where children and adults can sit comfortably together.

Put a 6 in all the places where the natural world can be found here (i.e. nature objects, and animals).

Put a 7 in all the places where there is something sparkly, shadowy and/or creates a feeling of magic or wonder.

Put an 8 in all of the places where children see or get to regularly write their names and other words that are important to them.

Put a 9 in all of the places where children can feel powerful and active in their bodies.

Put a 10 in all the places children can calm “themselves”.

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FOCUS FOR PLANNING

Classroom: _______________  Date: _______________

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INTEREST PLAN

Date: ____________________________________________________________

Topic: ______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Children involved: ________________________________________________________________________________________

How did interest evolve? ____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Interest
(Questions, Knowledge, Opportunities for Learning)

| Environment
(Centers, Physical Space) | Strategies
(Materials, Activities, Teacher Action) |
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Observations
(Comments / Actions)

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Classroom Reflections for Planning Learning Experiences

What are some ways I added to the children’s play?

How might I have gained the child’s perspective about an idea or issue?

How were children encouraged to engage in multiple exchanges during conversations with two or more children?

What opportunities were available for children to share their work?

What is an example of how I responded to an error in a child’s thinking?

What games might I make or introduce to enhance a child’s understanding of a concept?

What are some new vocabulary words the children or I used today?

When I read to the children today, what strategies were used to call attention to words and letters?

What opportunities were available for children to write for meaning?

What strategies were used to support children’s numerical understanding?

What do I know about a child that I didn’t know before?

How will I use the data I gathered to plan further learning experiences?
Why Play Is Important

Play promotes sociomoral growth as children

- practice social skills
- learn to take the perspective of others
- participate in turn taking, cooperation, and sharing
- develop empathy and deal with issues of fairness and rule-making/following through with conflict with increasing flexibility
- experiment with leadership roles
- experience sheer fun (the positive aspect of fun is that it is essential to physical growth and a strong motivation for every kind of learning)
- increase goal-directed behavior and persistence
- use creative imagination
- pursue their own ideas
- use social interactive skills (status, role, norms, friendship, positive justice, etc.) to tolerate delays
- use play as a healing power
- combat stress

Play promotes cognitive development as children

- change themselves into objects, or other people, or place themselves in other situations
- combine and practice concepts they have already assimilated
- use and rehearse new skills by putting together thinking skills in new ways to fit the play situation
- learn new ideas from peers
- share and communicate thoughts through roles they assume
- think divergently
- increase problem solving abilities
- reconstruct reality in thought, achieve group goals, construct ideas, and connect them to basic situations, roles, and events and suspend reality
- think abstractly and less literally about the world
- develop new ways of doing things
- experiment with objects
- plan scripts and settings
- learn to distinguish fantasy from reality
- encounter cognitive dissonance
- construct academic knowledge
- risk new experiences  (*continued, next page*)
- try out and observe different ways to influence events
Play promotes literacy and language development as children

- use communication skills (during rituals, topic development and maintenance, turn taking, negotiation, etc.)
- reconstruct events and sequences in events/stories, thus developing increased story comprehension
- rely on language to organize and structure their play
- increase speech fluency
- practice new vocabulary by connecting words and images with a context
- practice imagery—an external and internal communication skill
- become increasingly aware of their own behavior/language
- increase the quantity and complexity of their language
- depend less on physical objects and realistic details
- affect different audiences of children with whom they play

Play promotes physical development as children

- coordinate their actions with the actions of objects and other people
- engage in activities that develop stamina, flexibility, strength, coordination, and fitness
- practice gross and fine motor-skill

Observation of children in play guides adults in planning programs and curriculum to meet children’s developmental needs.
Resource Bibliography
Project Construct, Module 1


Resources for Project Construct Module 1

Levine, Diane E. (2013). *Beyond Remote Controlled Childhood Teaching Young Children in the Media Age*. Washington DC: NAEYC.

Children’s Literature


