

Unit 3 – Social-Emotional Development

Key Topic 4: Universal Design, Individualizing, and Family Partnerships

Focus Statement

Students explore ways to support social-emotional development while working with each child as an individual through universal design and individualizing curriculum. Students also learn ways to form partnerships with families to support social-emotional development in preschool children.

Before You Start

As stated in the introductory chapter to the framework, “a fundamental consideration in planning curriculum for individual children is being responsive to the competencies, experiences, interests, and needs each child brings to the preschool classroom” (*California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1*, p. 3). This requires being responsive to diverse cultural communities, languages, family structures, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

To support these contributions in curriculum planning, this key topic is divided into three subtopics. Each emphasizes features of the curriculum framework that focus on working with each child as an individual: universal design, individualizing curriculum, and forming partnerships with families.

Please note that the same active learning segments for the Universal Design, Individualizing, and Family Partnerships subtopics are used in the language and literacy, English-language development, and mathematics domains. Slight modifications are made in each domain to reflect its specific content. This should enable instructors to use each key topic individually in each domain or to expand the subtopics across domains. Note, however, that the content for this key topic for English-language development has some unique content.

Information Delivery

The following content from the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* (PCF, V1) can be used to lead students into this key topic and/or is referenced in this key topic. This content may be delivered through lectures and/or assigned readings.



- California's Preschool Children (pp. 3-5)
- Universal Design for Learning (p. 13)
- Domain guiding principle in social-emotional development: "Support social-emotional development with intentionality" (p. 39)
- Overarching principle from PCF, V1: "Individualization of learning includes all children" (pp. 7-8)
- "Partnering with families in curriculum planning" (p. 23)

Point out that Appendix D in the PCF, V1, "Resources for Teachers of Children with Disabilities or Other Special Needs," could be a starting point for students in finding resources for supporting the social-emotional development of young children with disabilities or special needs (pp. 319-322).

Active Learning

Subtopic 1: Universal Design



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Getting it started

Begin by having students read the definition of and key points about universal design for learning described in the PCF, V1 on page 13. Write each approach (i.e., "multiple means of representation," "multiple means of expression," and "multiple means of engagement") at the top of a sheet of chart paper. Because these concepts may be new to your students, it is suggested that you spend some time discussing each one by reviewing the examples provided in the PCF, V1 and providing some additional ones. Also encourage students to share any experiences they have had with adapting curriculum for young children with disabilities or special needs. Ask a few students to write these examples from the PCF, V1 under each heading.

Keeping it going

The following could be done as an out-of-class assignment.

Point out to students that suggestions for supporting children with disabilities and special needs are included in the interactions and strategies.

Assign students in pairs or small groups to different strands or



substrands and ask them to review the interactions and strategies.

Note to faculty: In Key Topic 3 of this unit, there is a list of the number of interactions and strategies for this domain that could help you assign roughly equal amounts to pairs or groups. Ask them to find those interactions and strategies that would be useful in working with children with disabilities or special needs. They are likely to find that most are useful for all children if applied with reflection and intention.

It is important to point out here that partnering with special education early childhood education staff is an essential part of determining appropriate adaptations for a child with a disability or special need.

Taking it further

Have students work individually or in small groups to review the interactions and strategies that they found. Have students write each interaction or strategy on a half sheet of paper or large Post-it® note. Then ask them to decide if they fall under “multiple means of representation,” “multiple means of expression,” or “multiple means of engagement.” Remind students that some may fall under more than one heading.

Then ask them to place the note on the chart paper with the appropriate heading. You could also have students do this by labeling three sheets of paper or three columns on a sheet of paper with the three approaches and writing the suggestions under their chosen heading.

After students have finished posting their suggestions on the appropriate categories, discuss why they made their matches.

Putting it together

You may wish to conclude this subtopic by having students discuss the following questions:

- What are some of the key concepts in universal design?
- Which concepts were clear to you? Which concepts were confusing?
- What other questions do you have about universal design related to children’s social-emotional development?



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- What resources do you think would be most helpful to you in your work?

Another approach

This could be done instead of the preceding exercises or in addition to them as an expansion.

Explain to students that they will be hearing from a guest speaker or panel to discuss considerations when planning for children with disabilities or special needs. This is not intended as an in-depth exploration but as an introduction to some of the ways in which curriculum can be made responsive to the needs of all children. Suggestions for panelists include early childhood special education teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, assistive technology specialists, preschool teachers with experience in including children with disabilities in their classes, and parents of children with disabilities or special needs.

Ask the presenters to address the importance of supporting children's social-emotional development, ensuring that children with disabilities can interact with their peers and adults in the class, and partnering with families. Provide the presenters with the information on universal design in the PCF, V1 (p. 13) and ask them to include examples of how they've used some of the strategies suggested. If students are not familiar with special education, ask the presenters to also give a brief overview that includes a summary of the assessment and IEP process; how services are provided; and ways that the special education teachers, therapists, and other specialists can work with teachers in preschool programs to figure out and/or provide the adaptations for each child who has a disability.

Ask students to note examples of each of the three universal design approaches from page 13 of the PCF, V1 that the speaker or panelists describe that support social-emotional development.

After the speakers have left, ask students to write any additional suggestions from the speaker or panel on the chart papers or their own lists.

Ask students to respond to the following questions individually or through a class discussion:



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- What information from the presenter(s) caught your attention or stood out for you?
- What are you most confident about in supporting the social-emotional development of children with disabilities? What concerns you?
- What new or different perspectives do you have? How has this discussion been helpful?

Subtopic 2: Individualizing

Getting it started

Begin this subtopic by reviewing the section in the framework titled “California’s Preschool Children” (PCF, V1, pp. 3-5). Have students find and summarize the key points and share them through a classroom discussion.



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Keeping it going

Next have students read the sixth overarching principle, “Individualization of learning includes all children” (PCF, V1, pp. 7-8).

Ask students to give examples of differences you might see in different children for each of the characteristics described in the sixth overarching principle: “. . . temperament, family and cultural experiences, language experiences, personal strengths, interests, abilities, and dispositions . . .” Ask some students to chart or take notes of the examples.

Taking it further

Assign a substrand to individual or groups of students and have them review the interactions and strategies for the assigned substrand. The students can reference the lists developed in Key Topic 3, or you may provide them with a list. As they review the interactions and strategies, ask them to note ways that the strategy can help teachers get to know children individually. For example, the strategy “Designate learning areas to help children select preferred sites” (PCF, V1, p. 47) can help teachers learn about children’s interests and preferences.

After the students have had time to identify examples in their assigned strategies and interactions, ask for some students to share one or two of their ideas with the whole class. Continue



the discussion until students have a good sense of how the interactions and strategies can support individualization for children.

Putting it together

Conclude this subtopic by having students consider the following questions that could help them get to know the individual characteristics of children who might be in their classrooms and how to plan for each child's continuing progress in social-emotional development:



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- What kinds of documentation could you use to help you understand individual children in terms of their social-emotional development?
- What are some ways you could get to know the families of individual children?
- How could you learn about the child's community?
- How could you find out what things a child is interested in?
- What different kinds of information about the child could you obtain by observing her during the different parts of the daily routine?
- What are some ways you could determine each child's strengths?

Subtopic 3: Family Partnerships

Getting it started

Point out to students that there is a section entitled "Engaging Families" at the end of each strand (PCF, V1, pp. 60, 76, and 85-86). In each of these sections, ideas are listed to give to families for use at home. Assign groups of students to each strand and have them list a brief summary of each strategy in their strand on pieces of chart paper—two strategies per sheet with blank space between the two strategies or as headings for two columns. Then ask them to list examples or expansions from the framework under each strategy and post their chart sheets on the wall.

Keeping it going

Next have the groups move to another sheet of strategies and add other ideas for implementing the strategy. This is similar to a brainstorming activity, so allow about 5 minutes per rotation and continue until all groups have added ideas to all the strategies.

Taking it further

Continue this exercise by having students review pages 3-5 of the PCF, V1, “California’s Preschool Children,” and identify examples of how children’s families are diverse.

Ask students to next think about other ways families are unique:

- Family composition in the home including primary caregivers, siblings, other family members
- Length of time in the United States
- Parents’ educational experiences in the U.S. or other countries
- Parents’ literacy skills
- Types of employment and work schedules
- Parenting beliefs and practices

Discuss how each of these characteristics might impact children’s social-emotional development.

Next have the students identify any considerations or additional ways to individualize the strategies for families. You could do this as a large group discussion or have the original groups add the considerations and additional strategies for their strand. Each group could then present its ideas.

Another approach

Instead of having students brainstorm ways to implement the strategies for engaging families (described in “Keeping it going”), ask students to interview teachers and/or parents to identify examples. These interviews could be conducted in different ways:

- Students first ask teachers and parents for ways that they have partnered, and the students then list these examples under the different strategies.



- Assign students different strategies and have them ask teachers and parents for examples for those specific strategies.

Putting it together

Conclude this subtopic by having students respond to these questions:



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- What considerations or ideas about the influence of families on children's social-emotional development caught your attention?
- Which ones resonated with you because of your experiences with children and families?
- Which strategies or interactions do you think are most important to include in order to build strong partnerships with families that foster children's social-emotional development?
- What is a first step you would take in building these partnerships?

Reflection



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You could have students reflect on this key topic by having them respond to the following questions for each subtopic or for the overall key topic. This could be done through journaling or as a discussion.

- What ideas stood out most for you today?
- Which ones reinforced what you have already learned or experienced? Which ones gave you a new perspective or insight?
- How might you apply a new perspective to your work now or in the future?
- What further information or support do you need?
- What first step do you need to do?

Deeper Understanding

The introduction of the social-emotional development domain in the PCF, V1 notes the relationship between social-emotional development in the early years and later school success. There



are several sources listed in the reference section of this domain on pages 91-93 of the PCF, V1 that directly address this relationship. Ask students to find these references and, after reviewing one or more of them, write a discussion of the findings reported in these papers. How you assign this to students will depend on their familiarity with reading research and with discussing findings. This topic could be extended to deeper research if appropriate for your students and particular class.