



Professional Learning Module
Developing a Reflective Practice through Quality Teaching and Learning

**Overview of Developing a Reflective Practice through
Quality Teaching and Learning**

The preschool year is a foundational year for most children and sets the tone for academic success. Research supports that a preschool program can significantly influence academic and social development of young children. However, the quality of the program makes a difference. "Children who attend high-quality preschool enter kindergarten with better pre-reading skills, richer vocabularies, and stronger basic math skills than those who do not," says NIEER director W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D. A critical component of a high-quality preschool program is the character of its teachers. Personality, general nature, disposition, temperament, and outlook on life impact who we are as an educator. Effective educators are self-reflective about who they are and how their character impacts the children they teach. Children learn more from who we are than what we teach.

Quality teaching and learning in preschool classrooms **involves** everything included in preschool programs where teachers provide a safe and loving environment and children's curiosity, exploration and love of learning is nurtured. Studies indicate that young children who are able to understand and express their own feelings, understand the viewpoint and feelings of others, cooperate with peers and adults and resolve conflicts are more likely to be successful in school. Social and emotional readiness is critical to a child's successful kindergarten transition, early school success and later well-being. These skills are rooted in relationships with adults.



Quality teaching and learning in preschool classrooms is **structured** around the *Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Kindergarten*. The standards provide a framework for what children need to know and be able to do at the end of their preschool program. Reflective educators have a comprehensive knowledge of the standards. It is important for teachers to be familiar with the *Educator's Guide to Understanding the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: Birth to Kindergarten*. This guide can be used as a resource to structure the learning progression in all the developmental domains and is designed to be used as a planning tool for early learning educators.

Quality teaching and learning in the preschool classroom is **maintained** through ongoing assessment. Assessment is a method for collecting information about something you want to measure. Teachers collect this information by conducting observations, screenings or assessments to determine if children are successfully making learning gains. Both formal and informal assessments are used to make curriculum adjustments and to inform instructional planning.

Quality teaching and learning in the preschool classroom **develops** when reflective educators have a plan in mind each day for meeting specific learning goals. Purposeful planning requires teachers to think about specific skills before they teach them. Reflective educators are flexible and can adapt activity plans to meet individual interests and needs of children.

Purposeful planning leads to intentional teaching and provides a specific path for learning that ensures all children will achieve developmental outcomes at their own pace.

Quality teaching and learning is **supported** by the educator's knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices especially when interacting with children in multi-aged classrooms. Reflective educators are able to take a child where they are developmentally and bring them forward to achieve at their expected age-level. It's important to know each child's strengths, interests and abilities in order to anticipate and scaffold their learning.



Quality teaching and learning in the preschool classroom **focuses** on implementing a curriculum that integrates learning throughout the day. Children will benefit when learning experiences are integrated across content areas that link skills and concepts during formal and informal learning opportunities throughout the day. In a well-planned, integrated learning environment, children can carry through with their natural desire to explore, discover, and act on the world around them. The increased exposure to concepts and skills through multiple opportunities to practice and reinforce skills will lead to better outcomes for children.

Quality teaching and learning is **enhanced** through communication with each child's family and involving them in their child's education. Families are welcome and encouraged to participate in a variety of ways. Reflective educators embrace the diversity of learners in their classrooms and are sensitive to family composition, language and culture. Families are consulted and included as partners in all aspects of their child's learning.

Quality teaching and learning **improves** when teachers engage in reflective teaching. Reflective teaching is a process where teachers think over their teaching practices, analyze how something was taught and how the practice might be improved or changed for better learning outcomes for children. "Reflection allows teachers to make effective, meaningful decisions about how to respond to and plan for children. It keeps them excited about their work and grows their practice," *Becoming a Reflective Teacher*, Carter, etc. Teaching Young Children Vol 3 No.4. Reflective practice is driven by the belief that educators can continually improve on their teaching.

Ongoing professional development opportunities are **critical** for continuous program and instructional improvement. Professional development is meaningful when determined by reviewing and analyzing data (information) from multiple resources to ensure teachers are engaged in targeted professional learning that is designed and implemented in order to improve outcomes for children.