Becoming a Reflective Professional Educator

This Section of the Manual has been designed to help you reflect on your teaching practices. It offers many resources and strategies that can help you grow in the teaching profession as you take charge of your own professional journey. There are many ways that this growth is demonstrated. One of those is through the selection and achievement of goals for your Professional Development Plan (PDP).

Assumptions about Children's Learning and Development

Every profession has core beliefs and principles that anchor it. These beliefs and principles provide a common set of ideals that direct early educators in their decision-making. It is important to recognize these core ideals for early education in order to provide high quality care and education programs for young children.

There is a substantial body of knowledge about the nature of children, the way they acquire knowledge, the ways in which they grow and learn best, and about the goals and aims of the early education process. There is strong support for intentionally designed learning environments with a focus on essential components such as: engaging children in active learning, ensuring that children's prior knowledge is built upon, that the whole child and all domains of development are utilized, and that families are considered collaborators in the educational process. The most recent research confirms what early childhood educators have insisted on all along: when experiences are relevant to children learning, objectives are met in all domains of development.

The publication **"North Carolina (NC) Foundations for Early Learning and Development"** (2013) serves as a shared vision for what NC wants for its children and answers the question, "What should we be helping children learn before kindergarten?" Electronic versions of this document are available on the following websites: http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/providers/pv_foundations.asp and http://www.ncpublicschools.org/earlylearning.

The **"Resource Manual for Administrators and Principals Supervising and Evaluating Teachers of Young Children"** (2010) was created as a practical guide for understanding all aspects of the NC Teacher Evaluation Process, including professional development, to support research based, developmentally responsive Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classroom practice. The guide describes core beliefs among early childhood educators that represent the historical roots of the field; the developmental principles of growth and learning; and the evidence-based research and current knowledge of best practices. An electronic version is available at: http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_eeslpd.asp and http://www.ncpublicschools.org/effectiveness-model/ncees/teachers/ .

Drawing on the core beliefs and principles as stated in the publications cited above, we suggest the following assumptions about children's learning and development as guiding principles to assist the teacher in ensuring that young children acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in school and in life.

Assumptions about Children's Learning and Development
- Children are innately curious.
- Children learn best by doing.
- Children learn through hands-on-activities.
- Children come to understand their world through active play.
- New learning should be connected to prior learning/experiences in order for it to be meaningful.
- Children learn through relationships/interaction; with peers, family members and teachers.
- Confidence in self is highly related to capacity for learning.

- Children can congratulate or condemn themselves.
- Children will be likely to learn if given many choices and a selection of materials and activities.
- Children have their own interests, rate, and time for learning.
- Children learn from other children through imitating/modeling during play and daily interactions.
- The environment can serve as a third teacher and major resource.
- All children want to learn and make sense of things.
- All children can actively participate in their own learning.
- Using open-ended questions encourages children to think.
- All children want to be involved in making classroom decisions.
- Children take pride in their work.
- Children strive to please adults.
- Children with disabilities may need adaptive equipment, materials, and modifications to classroom arrangement.
- Children are born with intrinsic motivation and when given the opportunity in a supportive environment with effective strategies, will develop self-regulation and self-evaluation skills.
- Families want what is best for their children.
- Each child has his/her own individual temperament.
- Families want to be involved in their children's learning.
- Children with disabilities have better outcomes when teachers collaborate consistently with families and specialists in order to best meet the needs of the whole child.
- Children with disabilities learn better in inclusive classrooms when interactions with typically developing peers are encouraged and supported.
- Growth, development, and learning constitute interdependent processes.
- Every child is unique and special.

As you can see, this list is not exhaustive and could go on infinitely. The professional educator's task is to consider these assumptions; add your own; and use them as guiding principles for planning for the children in your classroom.

Meaningful Collaborations

For decades much focus has been placed upon the role and responsibilities of the individual teacher. A variety of programs, methods, and philosophies have been presented, studied, and evaluated in order to identify the best possible actions and behaviors to facilitate children's learning and achievements. The focus on the 21st Century School reflects a dynamic paradigm shift that places the individual teacher in several collaborative groups (e.g. teacher/director/mentor/evaluator team; Professional Learning Community (PLC), agency/program work group, IEP Team.) The teacher finds strength in working with others in a teaming approach that calls for a shared purpose, clear directions, and agreed upon values and goals. In any group or team, using an exchange of shared knowledge should always have the learning and development of each child as the primary focus. Team members are action oriented, learn by doing and treat each other with respect.

Employing Collaborative and Interactive Teaming Variables
I. Team Goals
    a. Purpose of the team is clear.
    b. Team goals are understood by all members.
    c. Team goals are established by team members.
    d. Team goals are attainable.

II. Team Roles
    a. The team has a leader.
    b. Team members are committed to the team process.
    c. Team roles are clearly understood.
III. Team communication
    a. Decisions are made for the good of the children.
    b. Team members have adequate listening and processing time.
    c. Decisions are reached by consensus.
IV. Team Cohesion
    a. The team has trust among the members.
    b. The team has unified goals.
    c. The team has healthy regard for disagreement.
V. Team Procedures
    a. Team members understand applicable rules and regulations (e.g. NC Pre-K Program Requirements, Policies for Children with Disabilities - IEPs).
    b. The EESLPD Office Guidelines and Protocol for Mentoring and Evaluation Services are clearly understood (e.g. Team Agreement Conference).
VI. Team Outcomes
    a. Team members develop and implement plans as needed for various components of the process (e.g., Team Agreement Conference, School Improvement Plan, Professional Development Plan, PLC Plan, IEP planning).
    b. Members are clear about their responsibilities for the plan.
    c. Outcomes are evaluated at regularly scheduled times.

Partnering with Families

Partnering with families is all about creating meaningful opportunities for families to be fully engaged in their child's education in order to strengthen the learning outcomes for the children you share. This collaboration is very different from the old model of simply "informing parents" about what is happening at school and in your classroom.

Your program or county may have a comprehensive plan for family engagement to implement [NC Pre-Kindergarten Program Requirements] so you should ask about that and be familiar with it. A Family Engagement Plan will outline strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making.

Meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's growth and development must be a two-way stream and based on:
  o Taking the time to get to know family members; their backgrounds, interests, skills and abilities
  o Mutual respect for beliefs, values, culture and circumstances
  o Individualized approaches for each family
  o Professional, non-judgmental interactions
  o Learning about the child from the family's point of view by LISTENING to them
  o Honoring and recognizing the family's knowledge about their child and strategies to support them (their experiences, desires and goals)
  o Understanding/assurance that you will communicate and work together to celebrate success and address challenges
  o Knowing the family's desire, availability and methods for participation and communication (meeting, phone calls, written notes, volunteering, etc.)
  o Maintaining open and ongoing communication with each family throughout the year

Intentionally creating a welcoming, inviting classroom for all children and their families is an important first step in creating a classroom community where families feel welcomed at any time. Framed family pictures, child & family made posters or books with family information, and special family objects are a few ways to begin a new school year with the involvement of families. Throughout the year, pictures and stories about family events continue to promote a strong family-school connection.

Examples of meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education:
   (1) Home visits: at the beginning and throughout the year;
   (2) Formal and informal parent/teacher conferences;
   (3) Classroom visits and options for parents and families to participate in and contribute to classroom activities;
   (4) Parent education/information (meetings, class website/blog, newsletters);
   (5) Family involvement in decision making about their own child and about their child's early childhood program;
   (6) Opportunities to engage families outside of the regular service day (examples: community events, program events).

As a teacher you should keep a log of family engagement activities, participation/volunteering, meetings, and communications for each child.

Non-English Speaking Families
When you have families who do not speak English you should have an interpreter/translator with you when meeting with the family. Written materials should be translated in the family's language. Learn about the culture of the family by asking them for information and doing some research on your own. You may ask for certain words, songs, books, traditions that can be useful in your classroom for their child.

Asking families about their child's language development and language use should focus on the home language(s) **and** the English language. A helpful tool for gathering this information about children with a non-English home language, called *Young Dual Language Learners: Gathering Background Information* has been developed by Head Start and can be found at:
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/docs/dll_background_info.pdf

When teaching Dual Language Learners, you also need to be familiar with research-based practices and recommendations for teaching these young children. Maintaining the home language of children/families while teaching the 2nd /English language is critical in the early development (cognitive, literacy, social). Additional information and resources can be found on the NC DPI - Office of Early Learning website:
http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/InfoforEducators/videoresources.asp

What is **in** the environment, as well as what is **absent** provides children with essential information about whom and what is important. So every effort should be made to create a setting that is rich in possibilities for exploring diversity, which starts with the children and families you serve.
See: how can you create a learning environment that respects diversity?

What To Do	**What To Avoid**
Have names, photos, individual spaces, and family information for each child in your classroom.	Limiting spaces for children so some have more and others have less (ex. cubbies, seating, displays of their photos/art).
Ensure that your classroom represents all families (cultures, ability/learning differences) through pictures, labels/print, books, play materials/toys, YOUR use of non-English words, bi-lingual teaching.	Limiting diversity materials/ adaptations, nor have anything **specific** to individual children's culture or special learning needs.
Ask families for information about their child, goals and dreams for their child and LISTEN, before sharing your information.	Cutting families off when they are telling you about their child in order "to get finished" with YOUR agenda!
Invite families to share information about their culture and/or their children's unique learning needs. EMBRACE differences!	Making assumptions about cultures and/or disabilities. Making stereotypical statements such as "*I know that all people from Mexico…*" or "*Children with Down Syndrome cannot…..*" REMEMBER that each family and child is UNIQUE.
Keep families informed about upcoming projects/investigations and actively ask for their ideas/contributions.	Sharing information late with families. NOT asking for their input or assuming that families will give you a ready response (friendly reminders may be needed).
Post lesson plans for families to see and allow families to contribute to the project/investigation - In the language of the family whenever possible.	Hiding your lesson plan in a corner, not easily accessible to families, or posting an outdated plan!
Contact a family to celebrate accomplishments.	Contacting a family ONLY when there are problems.
Negotiate with families what they can and are willing to contribute to your classroom and their child's learning.	Telling families that there are things they <u>must</u> do to contribute to your classroom.
Provide multiple opportunities for families to participate in classroom activities (eat lunch/breakfast; read to their child or all children; gardening; special activities based on their interest/profession).	Limiting families' participation to only volunteering for field trips.
Be aware of and ask about community events important to families (ex. specific to culture, any of the family members) and ask if you may attend.	Telling families ONLY about your school/program's events, dismissing other events that are important to them.

Assessment Made Easy

In addition to using Approved Curricula, Early Childhood Programs in North Carolina must use Approved Formative Assessment Tools. Teachers must be familiar with these requirements and also understand the importance of the ongoing, formative assessment of the children they teach: what assessment is, why, what & how we assess.

Assessment is:
- done everyday in your personal and professional life
- each time you check on an item, a concept, an idea, or an event you are collecting information to help you make the best decisions for that matter at that time (e.g. checking on the weather to decide what to wear)
- in the classroom, you gather data, whether formally or informally, to help you plan and implement a high quality living/learning environment for each child and adult in your classroom

Why assess:

Assessment is done:

- in the preschool world to support children's learning and developmental journeys
- to lay the foundation for making developmentally appropriate teaching strategy decisions on a daily basis
- to allow intentional planning for individual children in order to meet their individual learning styles, their approaches to learning, their interests, and their levels of skill development in the social and cognitive world
- to enable children to express what they know and what they are able to do

What to assess:

- what children need to learn (are expected to know and be able to do) to inform teaching
- all developmental domains outlined in the *NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development*
- what children understand, are interested in, and are able to do – in daily routines, conversations, interactions and play
- which accommodations/modifications can assist children with different abilities and learning needs to be successful
- when and how children use materials provided in learning centers and if they can easily and independently access/choose what they want to play with
- specific behaviors you observe rather than what you think/believe a child is doing (e.g. child is **looking at the book and answering questions** rather than: child **likes** reading a book)
- the effectiveness of your teaching strategies

How to assess:

- observations/anecdotal notes
  - what you **see** children do, such as: the choices they make, how they use classroom space and materials, how they may use gestures/pointing to communicate
  - what you **hear** children say, such as: conversations they have with teachers and peers, how they answer questions
- conversations: one-on-one and in small/large groups
- work samples
- children's art and drawings
- photographs
- audio, video clips
- family questionnaires, home visits, meetings
- checklist, rating scales, child profiles
- journals: both children's and teacher's
- portfolios: both children's and teacher's
- reflection on your teaching and lesson plans (See "Self-Evaluation" below for guidance)

What to do with Assessment Data

- review and interpret the information/data you have collected to make inferences and draw conclusions (e.g. what does it tell you? what does it mean?)
- be open-minded with your findings and explore varied hypotheses for meaning
- base instructional decisions on what you understand about what you see and hear (your observations) and the completion of data over time
- use the results to intentionally plan for individual children and provide the support they need to be successful
- incorporate the findings into lesson plans, goals and objectives

- use the data to inform families about their child's progress and learning. Show families the pictures, drawings and work samples of their child
- use data to make suggestions to the administration, changes in policies and procedures, needs for classroom materials and community support (for the whole class or for individual children)

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Example from a Pre-K Teacher:

What do you do with data and observations after you get them?

I monitor and adapt the learning goals for each child based on the data collected and use the data for short and long range planning. I plan activities around art, science, literacy and social skills. Portfolios show the progress of each child.

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Strategies to support the ongoing assessment of children

Children show us what they know and are able to do throughout all daily activities and their play. The teacher must take advantage of this by intentionally planning for assessment data to be collected throughout the day. Along with the research-based Approved Formative Assessment Tools teachers often use teacher made materials. The following are strategies you may consider using in your classroom to gain concrete evidence of children's progress.

- Align *Foundations* with your Curriculum on the lesson plan; post learning goals throughout your classroom (e.g. what children can learn in each center).
- Set learning goals daily for individual children and incorporate those in your lesson plan (differentiation), examples may be: different questions to ask during story time, special spoon and bowl a child may need for independent feeding, pairing children during play.
- Use charts to make learning "visible" for children. These can be Learning Webs or **KWHL** charts that document what children **K**NOW, **W**ANT to learn, **H**OW to find out and what they have **L**EARNED about a unit/topic. You write on these charts what children tell you and they should reflect children's' interests, previous learning, participation in planning and skills.
- Allow children to make books about their learning (with photos, drawings, dictation). Place these books in the reading center so children can look back at special events and reflect on what they experienced/learned.
- Have children "sign in" each day when they arrive – use a specific, easily accessible area with a daily sign-in sheet including the day of the week and the date (some teachers use white boards for this, if you do: make sure to take a picture of the "signed" names regularly to document progress in name writing).
- Have "sign-up" sheets for popular centers: a blank smaller sheet (or white board) located near the center and with the name of the center at the top.
- Establish classroom rules and rules for certain centers WITH children, post them in the classroom (written in positive language) with a date and have children "agree" by signing their name. Remember that classroom or center rules can change over time!
- Make writing materials available to children in each learning center so they can draw, graph, write during their play in centers. Talk with children about these and make notes about what they tell you.
- You can develop a time-line learning progression such as a checklist of hierarchy of skills (from simplest to most complex) to document gains in the critical elements of learning; use children's drawings, writing, invented spelling, dictated comments and stories. Make sure you date your entries and children's work!
- Use classroom center observations by keeping anecdotal notes of children's play (single, cooperative) such as: preferences, choices, evidence of planning, interactions and signs of leadership. **Document what you see and hear – no opinion, just evidences**. Be aware that your documentation does not interfere with your interactions – there is a fine line between when to document and when to interact with the children!

- Ask open-ended questions about children's art and document their responses. Ask permission to write dictated comments on their work or use a separate sheet – date the art.
- Organize the information you collect to quantify and summarize the information. This will help you interpret the data and lead you to next steps of planning for the children and sharing with families.

Children's Portfolios

Assessment is not only done by the teacher but also by the children. Children make decisions daily based on their interests, previous experiences and learning, their successes, and things they find pleasant and unpleasant. In Infancy the child seeks feedback by following an action with a glance at the caregiver to gain a sense of approval. Toddlers (learning to walk, say words, or pick up a toy) take pride when parents or caregivers smile their approval, clap their hands or convey with words their satisfaction with the child's behavior/accomplishment. Preschoolers look for "high five" type signs of success. At this age they can take an active role in their own assessment through their journals and portfolios.

Creating a child's portfolio is a major way of collecting data. For the purpose of this section, a portfolio is defined as a purposeful, well-organized collection of children's work. The materials collected come from everyday activities and provide documentation of their involvement in activities and the products they have created over time. It is therefore important that their work is dated.

An outline for a portfolio can look like this:
- **I.   All About Me:** Name, where child lives, age, birthday, favorite color, favorite song, favorite story, what I like to eat, my family, my pet(s), my best friend's name, my other friends are, what I like to play, when I grow up I want to be, weight/height, handprints, interviews, emotional questions/answers such as I feel happy when…, I feel sad when…, I feel scared when…, I feel mad when…, I feel silly when…
- **II.   Self and Family:** Drawings of self and family with dictation - several times each year.
- **III.   Fine Motor:** Monthly samples of drawing, gluing/pasting, cutting, graphs, photos of fine motor play.
- **IV.   Writing Samples:** Monthly samples of scribbling, writing such as: sign-in, name on art, journals, writing "stories".
- **V.   Language & Literacy:** Language: Photo-Voices, story-telling, questions and answers, dictation on drawings, Literacy: Alphabet knowledge, print and book concepts, phonological awareness, rhyming, reading comprehension activities, nightly reading journal, home activities.
- **VI.   Mathematics:** Number and operations observations, counting, numeral recognition, matching, sorting, size seriation (smallest to largest), patterns, spatial sense. May include photos, graphs.
- **VII. Science and Social Studies:** Science: Predictions, inventions, experiments, observations. Social Studies: Maps, "How To…" Planning and observations. May include photos, graphs.
- **VIII. Creative Expression:** Samples of child drawing, painting, sculpturing, carving. May include photos.

Building a child's portfolio around the domains of *Foundations* is another way to organize and ensures that you are collecting samples to document the students' growth in all domains. Talk with your Mentor about the method that works best for you and your children.

Teachers provide opportunities, methods, feedback, and tools for students to assess themselves and each other. (NCEES: Standard IV – h.) The child's portfolio can serve as a major tool for a child's self-assessment. With dated entries, selected jointly by the teacher and the child, the child's development and learning over time are documented and the child can compare earlier entries with current ones. Some portfolios are representative of the beginning, middle and end of the academic year. When the portfolio contains a range of work that is representative of children's everyday experiences (emerging skills, accomplishments, interests, new knowledge, strengths and needs) it can become a child's self-portrait that shows his/her growth and development in all domains (NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development). The portfolio will also reflect each child's uniqueness.

Developmentally Appropriate Use of Technology

Teachers in North Carolina are expected to integrate and utilize technology in their instruction (NC Professional Teaching Standard: IV d). Technology is all around us and important to children's learning. There are many forms of technology including cameras, phones, adaptive equipment, computers, tablets, interactive white boards, touch screens, DVD and music players, audio recorders, electronic toys, games, e-book readers, and older analog devices such as tape recorders, VCRs, VHS tapes, cassette players, light tables, flashlights, projectors, scales for weighing, measuring devices and microscopes.

As teachers of young children we must ensure that all technology is used in developmentally appropriate ways that optimize opportunities for young children's cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and linguistic development. We need to remember that the brain's functioning -- and thus its "readiness" for any type of learning -- is shaped by many factors. The environment and interactions influence the development of a young child's brain. Like a sculptor, the child's experience prunes away unneeded -- or unused -- synapses, while strengthening those patterns of connections that are repeatedly used. A brain, which is actively involved and curious, is likely to develop stronger connections than one that is merely a passive recipient of learning. (Adapted from *Endangered Minds* by Jane Heely).

> *"Interactive media* refers to digital and analog materials, including software programs, applications (apps), broadcast and streaming media, some children's television programming, e-books, the Internet, and other forms of content designed to facilitate active and creative use by young children and to encourage social engagement with other children and adults."
> NAEYC Position Statement, 2012.

Teachers need to be aware of the *North Carolina Child Care Rules* [NCAC 09 .0500] that provide requirements and guidance for the use of certain technology. For children two years and older: "When screen time, including television, videos, video games, and computer usage is provided, it shall be:
    (a) Offered only as a free-choice activity,
    (b) Used to meet a developmental goal, and
    (c) Limited to no more than a total of two and a half hours per week, per child.
Usage time periods may be extended for specific special events, projects, or occasions….."

As with all planned learning experiences, the use of technology must be intentionally planned for to meet specific learning goals. Technology and media are tools that are effective only when used appropriately. Even when a device or program is labeled "educational", it may be lacking essential design, instruction, content, accessibility, and individualization features that are characteristics of high-quality educational software. Early childhood professionals must use the guiding principles of early education and educational technology to become well informed and critical consumers of technology (More and Travers, 2013).

Questions to ask when considering technology, both Equipment and Programs or APPs:
- Age & equitability: Can the equipment/program be accessed equally by all children within the age group I teach (and with varying ability levels)?
- Learning goals and perceptible information: What can children learn in different developmental domains (motor, cognitive, language/communication, social)? Can any child in my class gain educational benefit from using the equipment/program? Are multiple senses stimulated (through animation, sound, tactile features)?
- Tolerance for error: does the program minimize negative feedback when children make mistakes?

- Physical effort and space: does the device/program engage children without tiring them? Is there enough space for more than one child to interact with the device/program?
- Simple and intuitive: Is it easy for young children to understand the device/program?
- Flexibility: Can children with a range of preferences and abilities use the device/program with minimal adult assistance?

When introducing children to new technology a teacher also needs to:
1) **Preview:** know the content, features/choices, length (e.g. of a video or CD/DVD) before making it available or viewing in small/large group;
2) **Explain:** how will you introduce the equipment/program and it's use to children?
3) **Develop** child appropriate rules for using the technology (e.g. timing, taking turns, signing-up).

For children with special needs or disabilities, assistive technology devices may increase the child's ability to actively participate in classroom routines and learning activities. The teacher should consult with the child's family and the team of professionals (special education teacher, therapists, etc).

Additional Resources:
1. *ENDANGERED MINDS*. (2012). Jane M. Healy, Ph.D. http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/future/creating_the_future/crfut_healy.cfm
2. *What's App With That? Selecting Educational Apps for Young Children with Disabilities*. (2013). More, C.M. and Travers, J.C. Young Exceptional Children. Vol. 16, No.2.
3. *Technology and Young Children*. (2012). NAEYC Position Statement and Resources: http://www.naeyc.org/content/technology-and-young-children

Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is an important component of becoming an intentional and reflective teacher. Being able to properly assess one's own teaching methods and strategies assists teachers in becoming more skilled as professional educators. Teachers continue to grow professionally when they are able to assess their own growth and development, articulate their ideas and hypotheses, investigate what's working and what needs to be revised/changed, explore what they would like to try in the classroom, and devise and implement strategies that work for them to best support the children they teach. Using the *Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers* the teacher rates his or her own performance at the beginning of the school year and reflects on his or her performance throughout the year. The self-assessment will also be used during the first observation post-conference and summary evaluation conference.

What to ask BEFORE implementing learning experiences?	What to ask AFTER implementing learning experiences?
• What are my children's learning needs, interests and prior knowledge?	• Were my children's learning needs met? Did children's knowledge base deepen? How do you know?
• What are themes, goals and objectives of the lesson?	• Were my children's interests and prior knowledge used? Were students interested and engaged?
• How will children plan for their own learning?	• Were themes, goals and objectives of lesson implemented?
• What materials are needed?	• Were children able to plan for their own learning? Did you listen to and document children's contributions? How?
• When, where, and how long is the activity?	• Were materials appropriate to meet goals?
• Will *ALL* children be able to participate? If not, what accommodations (assistive technology, additional	• Are there additional materials that would have expanded/enabled successful outcomes of activity? • Was the lesson implemented in the manner originally

teacher support, adaptations) are needed?	planned (time, location, length of activity)?
• What will you do if a child chooses not to participate in a planned experience?	• Were *ALL* children able to participate? • Were there children who chose not to participate? Why?
• How will children assess their own learning?	• What accommodations/modifications were needed? Are other accommodations/adaptations needed for next time?
• What differentiation will you use in the experience (for learning styles, language, culture, skills, experiences, interests, building on strengths)?	• Were children able to assess their own learning? How? • Was differentiation addressed during the activity?
• What domains of development are included in the activity? Alignment with *Foundations*?	• Domains of development covered and linked to *Foundations*?
• What about the activity is motivating and engaging for children? How do you know?	• Was the activity motivating and engaging? Why or why not? How do you know? • Classroom environment changes for next time?
• How will you assess content learned?	• Were you able to assess content learned and learning objectives met? How? • How will you alter or what will you consider for next time?

Diversity Self-Assessment (Adapted from Salend, 2008)

With the increasing diversity in our schools/classrooms, a teacher must be aware of his/her own beliefs and attitudes towards differences and reflect on the following questions:

- What is my definition of diversity?
- Do the children in my classroom come from diverse cultural backgrounds?
- What are my perceptions of children and families that come from different racial or ethnic groups? Language or dialects different from mine? With special needs?
- What are the sources of these perceptions (e.g. friends, relatives, television, movies)?
- How do I respond to the children in my class based on these perceptions?
- Have I experienced others making assumptions about me based on my membership in a specific group? How did I feel?
- What steps do I need to take to learn about the children from diverse backgrounds in my school and classroom?
- How often do social relationships develop among children from different racial or ethnic backgrounds in my classroom and in the school? What is the nature of these relationships?
- How do I represent and incorporate diversity in my classroom?
- What kinds of information, skills, and resources do I need to acquire to effectively teach from a multicultural perspective?
- In what ways do I collaborate with other educators, family members, and community groups to address the needs of all my children and families?

Stress Management Tips for the Teacher

Stress, pressure, anxiety, tension: whatever you call it, can have a powerful impact on all of us. A certain degree of stress in our lives is a reality, but can challenge us to consider what we need to learn and do to manage the stress rather than to be overwhelmed by it.

I. Stress the Positive
- Keep a happy journal: What happened to make your life happy today (e.g., in school, with children, at home, with friends and colleagues)?
- Talk to a friend or a colleague about successes.

II. Make simple de-stressing techniques part of your day

- Exercise is one of the best stress busters because it forces deep breathing. Exercise helps release endorphins, which relieve stress.
- Show your emotions of laughter and tears, as they are natural stress mitigators.

III. Know the source of your stress
- What is stressing you out? Without knowing the root of your problem, you're unlikely to resolve it.
- Don't be afraid to reach out for help if and when you need it.

IV. Get to the Root of the Problem
- Investigate the circumstances that surround a problem.
- Make real changes that lead to solutions rather than applying Band-Aids to the problem.

V. Let Go
- Recognize the difference between the things you can control and the things you cannot.
- Starting today make a pact with yourself to stop stressing about the things you have no control over.

VI. Beware of the To-Do List
- Take note of all the good work you do and give yourself credit for it.
- Set short-term goals and allow yourself to take satisfaction in achieving them.

VII. Learn to appreciate feedback
- Try not to personalize any criticism you receive.
- Look at feedback comments as constructive criticism that allows you to make appropriate decisions/changes.

VIII. Collaborate with colleagues
- Avoid falling into the trap of thinking you are the only person who can do the work. Buy into the concept of "we".
- Learn how to express yourself with colleagues and team members.

IX. Strive for balance
- Make time for family, friends.
- Have hobbies and fun.

X. Look at the Big Picture
- Remember that you are an advocate for high quality Early Childhood Education for North Carolina's children, teachers, family, and community.
- Make yourself heard on issues and policies that affect the lives of all young children.

Developing a Meaningful PDP

A *Professional Development Plan* (PDP) is the tool used for guiding and documenting your professional growth. The information provided in this Section can help you develop and implement a meaningful PDP. After reflecting on your teaching using your completed self-assessment, and with input from your team, select a few goals (2-3) each year that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable/**A**chievable, **R**elevant/**R**ealistic, **T**ime bound (**SMART** goals). Frequent reflection on your teaching practices and children's learning, collaboration with others, and the support of your Mentor and/or Evaluator can help you monitor and steer your PDP throughout the year. Setting and achieving professional goals each year sets the course for your journey to becoming a Reflective Professional Educator and strengthening your teaching skills. A successful journey becomes a path to lifelong learning!