

Module 4: Education Programs and Classroom Environment

Section B: Daily Schedule and Lesson Planning

Introduction

In this section you will learn basic information about planning for an early care and education classroom. The daily schedule and weekly lesson plan are the planning tools that organize the daily routines and activities for the early childhood classroom. The daily schedule provides a timeline that guides classroom activities and routines. The weekly lesson plan provides specific information on learning activities and experiences. Daily schedules and lesson plans are adapted based on the individual needs, ages, and developmental levels of the children. The Arizona Early Learning Standards, the Arizona Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines, and the Program Guidelines are all found on the Arizona Department of Education's website. These are some of the planning resources that early childhood teachers may use in planning developmental learning activities. Specific program philosophies and curriculum models are other resources used in planning classroom schedules and learning activities. It is essential that you speak with your Center Director about how Daily Schedules and Lesson Plans should be implemented.

Learning Objectives

After completing this section you will be able to:

- Explain the components and rationale for a daily schedule for each classroom.
- List examples of categories for learning activities in your specific classroom.
- List examples of learning activities to encourage during routines and transitions.

Guiding Your Learning

As you work through this section look for the various components of a daily schedule and lesson plans. How do daily schedules vary between different age groups?

NOTE: The information contained in these sections are partial summaries of the DHS Child Care Licensing Regulations, are not intended to replace or provide an official interpretation of the Arizona Administrative Code and Arizona Revised Statutes for Child Care Facilities.

Summary of Key Arizona Licensing Child Care Licensing Standards

R9-5-501 General Child Care Program, Equipment, and Health and Safety Standards

A daily schedule with times must be posted in each classroom or activity area that includes daily routines, learning activities, individual, small group, and large group activities, and times for outdoor experiences. A weekly lesson plan is required to be posted. The weekly lesson plan needs to reflect children's age-appropriate activities that promote children's learning and development in the developmental areas of cognitive, language, social-emotional, and large and small muscle development.

5. A weekly lesson plan is planned, posted, and includes the following opportunities for each child to:
 - a. Gain a positive self-concept
 - b. Develop and practice social skills
 - c. Think, reason, question, and experiment
 - d. Acquire language skills
 - e. Develop physical coordination skills
 - f. Participate in structured large muscle physical activity
 - g. Develop habits that meet health, safety, and nutritional needs
 - h. Express creativity
 - i. Learn to respect cultural diversity of children and staff
 - j. Learn self-help skills
 - k. Develop a sense of responsibility and independence
6. Lesson plan activities that include screen time must list the amount of screen time.
8. Lesson plan activities that are not implemented and the substituted activity needs to be identified on the lesson plan.

Daily Schedule

The daily schedule will vary in each child care program depending on basic operating hours, the type of program, the ages and developmental levels of the children, the program philosophy, and the curriculum approach. Children thrive and feel secure in a predictable and stable environment of familiar people, routines and activities. Daily schedules provide a foundation of consistency and stability that encourages the development of teacher and child relationships. When children know what to expect it gives them security and some control over their day. At the same time the daily schedule must remain flexible in order to adapt to the changing needs or interests of each child and to take advantage of special events.

Characteristics of Daily Schedules

- The daily schedule provides a timeline from when the center opens to when it closes.
- The daily schedule presents a list of the daily activities and routines. Schedules may be developed based on a specific timeframe for each activity and routine or be arranged in larger blocks of time.
- Daily activity schedules provide alternating activities between:
 - a) Teacher- directed and child-initiated activities
 - b) Quiet and active play
 - c) Times for routines such as meals, snacks, and naptime
 - d) Individual, small group, and large group activities
 - e) Indoor and outdoor play
- Time allotted for exploration in learning centers is dependent on the age of the children. Depending on the learning center activities, children's attention span, and time of day, older children may be able to maintain their focus in centers for up to 60 minutes. Learning centers

allow for children to explore many different areas at the same time such as sensory, science, dramatic play, art, and language. Because learning centers are small, they encourage meaningful social interactions amongst the children and teachers. Frequent transitions between activities and routines distract children from focused interactions and learning. To minimize transitions many personal care activities such as clean-up of materials, toileting, diapering, and hand washing can be conducted on an individual basis during learning center times.

- Maintaining a flexible and individual schedule that allows children to complete activities or personal care routines prevents transitions where children wait for others to finish an activity or while all children use the bathroom at the same time.
- Schedules that are too flexible and activities that are unorganized may create a chaotic environment. For example meals and snacks that are late or early or children waiting for the teacher to gather the materials for an activity can create wait times for children that may lead to inappropriate behaviors.

Key Elements of the Daily Schedule

Routines

Routines are a large part of the regular daily schedule in child care programs. Routines may be defined as events that occur on a regular basis and require a series of responses from children and adults.

Routines are defined by Wittmer and Petersen (2010) as important for teaching children life's lessons in social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical experiences. Routines provide young children with life experiences in responding to others, developing self-care skills and gaining independence.

Examples of routines include:

- Getting ready for lunch is a routine that involves hand washing, finding a place to sit at the table, pouring milk or passing food, clearing the plate, and cleaning the table.
- Preparing to go outside is another routine that may include putting learning center materials back on the shelf, helping to clean up the art area, or sweeping the floor, going the bathroom, and listening to a story until all the children are ready for outdoor play.
- Routines in infant and toddler classrooms make up a large portion of the day and involve feeding, diapering or toilet training, and sleeping.

Research has found that routines influence young children's emotional, cognitive, and social development by helping the children feel secure and by helping them understand and predict classroom expectations. When children feel secure they feel confident and engage in positive behaviors. Children who experience a chaotic environment that lacks routines and expectations are more likely to engage in more frequent behavior problems including tantrums and aggressive behavior.

Routines are especially important in infant and toddler classrooms. Routines provide opportunities for teachers to engage in individual interactions with the child as they change a diaper or feed the child a

bottle. Toddlers benefit equally from the individual attention that occurs during diaper changes and potty training. Positive interactions and communication are factors that encourage the development of attachment and are more easily facilitated with a consistent routine and schedule. Preschool and pre-kindergarten children continue to develop communication skills through routines that include snacks and lunch. Personal care routines and hygiene skills provide children with opportunities to gain self-confidence, independence, and responsibility.

Learning Centers and Activities

Learning centers provide a basic environmental and educational structure for early care and education programs. The majority of learning center activities is child-initiated; however, teacher directed small group activities may be part of the lesson plan. These take place during center time. Learning center activities are planned by classroom teachers around children's interests and abilities to provide developmental learning opportunities. Each learning center provides the materials and equipment to provide the young child with opportunities to explore and learn. Teachers plan, expand, and change learning center activities based on the developmental and learning needs of individual children and the classroom group. Learning centers offer children the opportunity to make their own choice of activities, which increases their level of interest and time spent in focused activity. Learning center time offers children more time and flexibility to thoroughly explore a concept while lessening the number of transitions throughout the day.

Learning Activities

Child -Directed Activities

Child-directed activities refer to the self-selected concrete exploration that occurs throughout an early learning and care program. Child-initiated learning takes place when the children select the activity including the choices about who will participate, the materials needed and the process to complete the task. Early childhood teachers facilitate the exploration and learning activities by creating the learning center environment with interesting developmentally appropriate materials and equipment. Proper creation of the learning environment which was discussed at length in Module 4, Section A will facilitate child-directed learning. Blocks of time for children to participate in learning centers provide children with time to develop complex play experiences that promote learning and development. Examples of child-initiated learning include:

- Block play
- Playing in the dramatic play or housekeeping area.
- Sensory tables
- Open-ended art materials for children to create their own masterpiece
- Manipulatives
- Literacy/language centers – writing, tracing, reading, listening stations

Why use child-directed learning?

- Young children are more open to learning when motivated by interesting and fun experiences that are self-selected.
- Active and concrete experiences increase new brain connections and develop children's cognitive abilities.
- Children develop language skills as they engage in experiences with other children and teachers.
- Child-directed learning provides play opportunities that build social/emotional skills.
- Child-initiated learning increases children's abilities to develop problem solving skills as they encounter obstacles or make mistakes. Teachers facilitate problem solving by asking open-ended questions and encouraging children to develop their own solutions.
- Child-directed learning forces children to predict outcomes and form their own theories of how the world works.
- When learning is self-directed it is more impactful and meaningful.

Teachers support child-initiated learning by:

- Observing each child's interests, abilities, and learning style (auditory, visual, or tactile) and providing materials and equipment to support their development and learning.
- Observing and listening to children as you plan activities for the group and individual children. Being aware of each child's interests and abilities is the best strategy for supporting learning.
- Providing an organized learning environment with a variety of materials that encourage cognitive, language, physical, and social-emotional development.
- Planning a daily schedule that provides children with enough time to engage in complex play.
- Using observations of children's play to evaluate opportunities to enhance and extend learning by adding new materials, asking open-ended questions, or providing new information through books, pictures, or stories.
- Supporting learning by assisting children as they learn new skills by scaffolding their play.
- Provide opportunities for children to repeat favorite activities. Rotate some of your equipment on a weekly or bi-weekly basis so children have multiple opportunities to use materials.
- Remaining flexible in your approach with children and offer the amount of support necessary for the individual child.
- Model learning by talking out loud, asking children for help with problems, and trying out their ideas and solutions.

Teacher-Directed Activities

Although the majority of your day should be spent in child-directed activities, there are times when you will want to plan and direct specific activities to teach children new skills or introduce a new concept. Teacher-directed activities allow you to spend time with small groups of children to focus on a targeted skill or area of development. Teacher directed activities include large group, small group, and individual learning experiences. In teacher directed learning experiences, the teacher plans the activity, chooses materials, and implements the experience. Time-frames for teacher-directed group activities vary based on the developmental stage and age of the children; however, a group activity that lasts 10 to 15 minutes is adequate. Examples of a teacher directed activities for preschool children are:

- A large group activity that includes a story and introduces a concept to the entire class.
- A small group activity on color identification and matching.
- An individual activity on learning to use scissors.

Ask your Center Director about the specific teaching strategies for encouraging child initiated activities in your classroom.

Transitions and the Daily Schedule

The first transition for the children in your classroom occurs during their arrival and the last transition occurs when they depart at the end of the day. Transitions occur throughout the day as children move from one activity to the next or between routines and activities. Children respond to the structure and consistency of the same routines and transitions. Using simple, clear directions that help children understand consistent transition expectations can prevent challenging behaviors that may occur. Minimizing the time that children wait between activities and/or routines is a key strategy in managing transitions in early childhood classrooms. Songs, nursery rhymes, movement activities, puppets, and books are examples of activities that can be used to get and keep the children's attention. Giving children visual cues will also assist in effective transitions. Things like a visual schedule with pictures or a special clean-up signal will make transitions smoother. As children learn the rhythms of the daily schedule of activities and transitions they learn social skills and gain independence.

Ask your Center Director about the specific transition strategies used in your center.

The Daily Schedule by Age Groups

Infant Schedule:

The day in the life of an infant revolves around the care giving routines that create the safe, healthy, and nurturing environment that promotes cognitive, language, physical, and social-emotional development. Infants require individual care that meets their daily patterns of sleeping, feeding, diapering, and awake times. The individual aspects of the infant care require a flexible daily schedule. Imagine all the infants on the same schedule! It would be difficult to hold and feed each infant or take the time to change diapers. Providing flexible schedules that allow the children to follow their own patterns assists infant teachers in providing the individualized and nurturing care required for infant growth and development. An infant schedule includes daily routines of feeding, diapering, and sleeping. When infants are awake the teacher provides developmental activities with a variety of materials. Floor time on carpeted areas provide infants with opportunities to develop physical skills such as rolling over, crawling and eventually walking. Developing infant schedules as large blocks of time is a good way to schedule the individualized daily routines and activities for infants.

Toddler Schedule:

Toddlers are active investigators who require the teacher's full attention! A well designed classroom environment and daily schedule provides times for the care giving routines of diapering, toilet training, sleeping, and eating, as well as, short group times, small groups, learning centers, and individual activities. Providing toddlers with opportunities to self-select activities and explore materials allows them to make choices and develops their independence. Older toddlers are ready to participate in small and large group activities. Outside play, active indoor play, and movement activities are key experiences for this age group. A schedule with larger blocks of time that offers flexibility for frequent changes in activities and care giving routines is a good option for toddler classrooms. The Arizona Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines are an excellent resource to help you prepare your daily schedule for this age group.

Preschool Schedule:

A typical preschool and pre-kindergarten schedule may include the following activities. You can use these areas to create your own schedule in your classrooms

- Opening of the Center: Breakfast, quiet learning centers
- Learning Centers: Children self-select learning centers for activities. May be conducted concurrently with the teacher working with different small groups. Teacher may facilitate activities in learning centers by rotating through the groups.
- Circle/Large Group Time: Teacher directed time frame is dependent on age of children with shorter timeframes for toddlers and increasing time for preschool and pre-kindergarten children. Name games, a short story, or a review of the activities available in each of the learning centers.

- **Snack Time:** Children participate in preparation or may have a snack table as a learning center that provides self-serve snack.
- **Small Group Times:** The teacher works with small groups of children on a specific learning activity. Typically this is done during Learning Center time.
- **Outdoor Playtime**
- **Personal Routines:** Hand washing, toileting, getting a drink, tooth brushing
- **Lunch:** Helping with lunch routines, eating lunch and clean-up
- **Quiet Time:** Quiet manipulative activities or stories. This should be combined with naptime for the children who do not want to sleep.
- **Naptime or Rest:** Children help prepare for nap by helping get their mat and blanket
- **Going Home:** Combined groups until parent pick-up. Choice of easy clean-up activities, manipulatives, playdough, art activity, writing center, reading center, outdoor play.

School Age Schedule:

School age schedules during the academic school year are typically for an hour or two in the morning and an equal amount of time after school. During the summer and out of school days a full day schedule can be implemented. The school age children are older and more independent than preschool children. The daily routines, with the exception of snack and mealtimes, can be handled by each child. School age children enjoy working on more detailed and creative activities and can spend longer amounts of time focused on an activity. School age children also enjoy a wide variety of board games and reading materials. A block schedule can work for this age group by providing large blocks of time for discovery and creating. In some programs this age group may have access to computers to use for homework or researching topics of interest that may become projects. Physical activities such as playgrounds, sports activities, exercise, and dance should be included as part of the school age schedule. In the afternoon, completing homework may be an expectation of the parents. A last consideration in school age activity schedules is to remember that during the school year the children have spent all day in a classroom environment. Planning some down time to relax with peers is a good way to start the afterschool day.

Lesson Planning

The classroom environment provides the foundation for learning activities, the daily schedule provides the timeframes for activities and routines, and the lesson plan provides the specific activities, materials, and learning goals. Lesson plans provide teachers with a tool to use in planning and organizing learning activities. Early childhood professionals recognize the importance of being organized when working with young children. Experienced teachers have learned that planning ahead and being prepared for the daily activities increase the likelihood of success in engaging children in activities and reducing challenging behaviors. Many programs use a prescribed curriculum so ask your Center Director how Lesson Plans should be created. Below are some suggestions if your program allows teachers to create their own curriculum.

An overview of the lesson planning process includes:

1. Observe the children to determine what they can do and what new skills you can introduce.
2. If appropriate, use the Arizona Early Learning Standards or other standards based developmental skill tool/checklist to determine the skills that are appropriate for the children.
3. Select learning objective (s) for the week based skills and abilities of the children in the group.
4. Plan learning activities for learning centers, small groups, and large group activities based on the selected learning objectives.
5. For each learning activity plan the resources, materials, and supplies required to implement the activity.
6. Record the learning activities on the lesson plan format used in your child care program.
7. Be prepared for Monday by taking a look at the lesson plan on Friday and make certain you have the morning activity materials, resources (storybooks), and supplies (art materials) prepared.
8. Prepare the new materials for the learning centers on Friday so activities are ready for Monday.
9. Evaluate the lesson plan activities during the week and start to plan for the coming week based on the children's abilities, interests, and needs.

What can the children do?

The first step in lesson planning is to observe the children in the classroom to determine their interest, needs, and abilities. Review the developmental milestones (Module 3B) for the age group you teach. Lesson planning varies based on the age of the children, the children's needs, interests, and abilities, and the program philosophy. The **Arizona Early Learning Standards and the Arizona's Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines** provide teachers with the developmental standards that describe what preschool and pre-kindergarten children can do. The teacher selects a standard to use for planning the weekly lesson plan.

Examples of an Early Learning Standard:

- A pre-reading indicator is: the child recognizes words that rhyme in familiar games, songs, and stories.
- The teacher lists the pre-reading indicator as a learning objective for the week.
- On the lesson plan for the week the teacher would plan to share stories or songs with rhyming words during group time.

The Arizona Early Learning Standards provide standards in the areas of:

- Social-Emotional
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Physical Development, Health, and Safety
- Fine Arts

What does the teacher plan?

The teacher plans for all the regularly scheduled classroom activities. Typically the teacher will develop a plan for each week that includes different activities that make up the daily schedule including learning centers, small group activities, large group activities, transitions, and outdoor play.

What development areas does the teacher include in her plan?

The teacher will plan activities to support all developmental areas each week including cognitive, physical, language, and social-emotional. One activity or experience might incorporate many of the developmental domains.

Learning Centers: The teacher may plan to include special materials in each learning center based on the theme and learning objective(s) for the week.

For example: If the learning objective is focused on rhyming words, the matching pictures of rhyming words may be placed as an activity in the reading area.

Small Group Activities: The teacher may plan for a small group activity during learning center time to introduce a concept.

For example: Using the same learning objective on rhyming words, the teacher may work with a small group of children to identify the matching pictures and match the pictures that rhyme during center time.

Large Group Activities: The teacher plans for a large group activity each day.

For example: If the learning objective is rhyming words, the teacher may select stories to read each day that contains rhyming words or select songs with rhyming words to sing each day. The teacher may also introduce the songs during group times and sing the songs at other times during the week.

Once the teacher has determined the activities for learning centers, small group, and large group activities, the next step is selecting learning materials, stories, props, and supplies required to for each activity. As you implement the lesson plans during the week, evaluate what worked and what might have gone better. Work with your Director and other teachers to plan and improve your lesson plans.

Successful lesson planning is the result of knowing your children, planning interesting and challenging activities, and being prepared!

****Speak with your Center Director for lesson planning instructions specific to your program.**

Steps to Creating a Lesson Plan

1. Review Developmental Milestones for your age group.
2. Determine which skills you would like to practice in each of the developmental domains. The Arizona Early Learning Standards and the Arizona Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines can offer some excellent suggestions for activities and experiences.
3. Determine if the activity or experience will be an individual activity put on one of your learning centers or a teacher-directed activity that will need your assistance.
4. Place activities into Lesson Plan.
5. Prepare the materials for the activities.
6. Date and post Lesson Plan.

Applying Your Knowledge

How does this information affect your work with young children?

- Providing an organized and planned environment helps you manage the classroom activities while improving the quality of interactions between teachers and children.
- Children respond to the daily structure and routine provided by a schedule of activities. When children know what to expect they develop a sense of security and belonging.
- Daily activities that focus on individual, small group, and large group activities provide young children with opportunities to develop social-emotional skills and social competence.
- Daily routines provide young children with opportunities to develop responsibility and independence.
- Lesson planning contributes to children's learning by ensuring activities are planned in each of the developmental areas.
- Lesson planning provides a tool for teachers that helps in organizing and preparing learning activities. Being prepared helps create a calmer and responsive environment for the children and the teachers.

Check Your Understanding

- ✓ Name the main parts of the daily schedule for your classroom.
- ✓ Explain the rationale for developing a daily schedule.
- ✓ What developmental areas (domains) are included in a lesson plan in your classroom?
- ✓ Why are routines an important part of the child care day? Name 3 routine times in your classroom.

Resources

Printable Resources

DHS – Helping Hands Tip Sheet on Transitions <http://www.azdhs.gov/als/childcare/documents/providers/helping-hands/transitions.pdf>

DHS – Helping Hands Tip Sheet on Daily Schedules

<http://www.azdhs.gov/als/childcare/documents/providers/helping-hands/daily-schedules.pdf>

DHS – Helping Hands Tip Sheet on Introduction to Learning Centers

<http://www.azdhs.gov/als/childcare/documents/providers/helping-hands/learning-centers-intro.pdf>

Additional Resources

Early Learning Standards – Arizona Department of Education

<http://www.azed.gov/early-childhood/files/2012/02/earlylearningstandards.pdf>

Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education – Arizona Department of Education

<http://www.azed.gov/early-childhood/files/2011/10/program-guidelines-complete.pdf>

Arizona’s Infant and Toddler Development Guidelines – Arizona Department of Education

http://www.azed.gov/early-childhood/files/2012/10/az_infant_toddler_guidelines_complete-2.pdf

References

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<http://voices.yahoo.com/preschool-teachers-guide-classroom-schedule-planning-676490.html>

Thurman & DeBord, (1998), *Preschool Planning Guide* Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Missouri-Columbia. Retrieved from <http://www.nccc.org/Curriculum/planguide.html>

Module 4-Section B Worksheet

Name the main parts of the daily schedule for your classroom.

Explain the rationale for developing a daily schedule.

What developmental areas (domains) are included in a lesson plan in your classroom?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Why are routines an important part of a child's day?

Name 3 routine times in your classroom.

1.

2.

3.
