MENTOR MINUTE

Using Foundations to Plan

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North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development (Foundations) is the Standard Course of Study for the teachers and classrooms supported by the Early Educator Support Office. Foundations can be used to:

- Improve teachers' knowledge of child development;

- Guide teachers' plans for implementing curricula;

- Establish goals for children's development and learning that are shared across programs and services;

- Inform families on age-appropriate expectations for children's development and learning"; (*Foundations*, 2013, pg.1)

- Be a resource to advocate for developmentally appropriate practice.

The Guiding Principles (pp.13-14) provide an overview of Foundations to support teachers' growing understanding and connection to "best practice" in early childhood. The 10 Guiding Principles offer evidence-based rationale for the entire document. Understanding the Guiding Principles provides a wide overview of developmentally appropriate early childhood classroom practice (see link to Guiding Principles document).

Foundations is a guide to using age appropriate goals and developmentally appropriate practice that provides teachers with a starting point to find out where children are developmentally. Developmental indicators provide specific information about what children should know or be able to accomplish at each age level. Teachers should use Foundations to find out what developmental steps individual children are taking now and what strategies they might utilize to assist children in progressing across the continuum (*Foundations* pp.2-5).

"Foundations is intended to be a guide for teaching – not a curriculum or checklist used to assess children's learning - but a resource to define the skills and abilities we want to support in the learning experiences we provide for children." (*Foundations,* pg.2)

Strategies for Supporting Teachers

- Utilizing Foundations to walk a teacher through the process of looking at specific goals and considering a child's developmental level and what strategies might encourage children to progress along the developmental continuum.

- Referencing and using Foundations Guiding Principles (see Guiding Principles Document).
  Helping teachers understand that lesson plans must address all developmental domains.

- Encouraging teachers to post Foundations goals/indicators around the classroom (This can help teachers be more intentional in using Foundations).

- Supporting teacher conversations in aligning DAP with parent expectations.

- Giving specific examples to teachers to bring Foundations to life (Mentor and Evaluator Roles)

- Making "I noticed" statements. Articulate how teachers may be using Foundations (i.e. "I noticed how you provided authentic feedback on how hard children were working in the block area today to add a roof to their building. This aligns with Foundations APL-9: Children persist at challenging activities. Let's look at the strategies for that goal (pg. 46) and see what other strategies you are using.")


A Mentor/Evaluator assists a teacher in understanding how her instruction aligns to Foundations.

Guiding Questions Mentors/Evaluators might use with Teachers:

- How do you use Foundations as a resource for planning next steps for your children?
- How can you use Foundations to determine if practice, expectations, and planning align with children's developmental level and developmentally appropriate practice?
- What are some ways that Foundations can support teachers in planning for materials in their centers/classrooms?
- How can Foundations support conversations with families?
- How can Foundations support children's approaches to play and learning (how children learn, children's attitudes toward and interest in learning) in order to enhance the classroom environment and teachers' intentional planning to meet the needs of all children? (*Foundations*, pg.28)
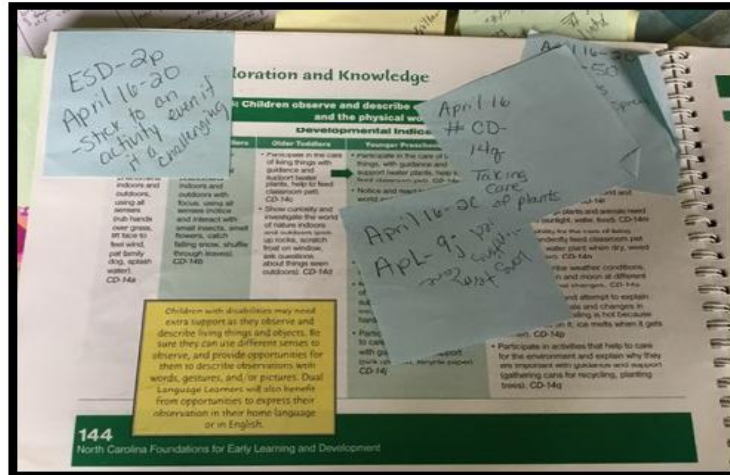
One teacher's example of how she used Foundations when planning for her children's needs in her classroom. Her Foundations book is "well-loved" and used!

Useful and Relevant Resources

North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development
https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/N/NC_Foundations.pdf

Foundations Guiding Principles Handout
https://ceme.uncc.edu/sites/ceme.uncc.edu/files/media/Foundations%20Guiding%20Principles%20Handout.pdf

Foundations Advanced Course– Guiding Questions by Module (1-6)

https://ceme.uncc.edu/sites/ceme.uncc.edu/files/media/Advance%20Foundations%20Course-Guiding%20Questions%20by%20Module%20%281-6%29.pdf

Foundations Advanced Course– Guiding Questions by Module (7-11)

https://ceme.uncc.edu/sites/ceme.uncc.edu/files/media/Advanced%20Foundations%20Course-Guiding%20Questions%20by%20Module%20%287-11%29.pdf

Possible conversations Mentors and Evaluators may have with teachers on understanding and utilizing Foundations.

Example 1:
Domain: Emotional and Social Development (ESD)
Goal: ESD-4: Children form relationships and interact positively with other children. (*Foundations,* pg.57)

Observation: Children are beginning to use appropriate words to influence playmates' behavior. (ESD-4h)

Next Steps: Children demonstrate social skills when interacting with other children (turn-taking, conflict resolutions, sharing). (ESD-4k)
Possible Strategies:
-Help children see the effect of their behavior on others by encouraging them to see others' perspectives and share their ideas about solving problems and social conflicts. (*Foundations,* pg.60, #5)
-Model asking for and understanding the viewpoints and opinions of others. (*Foundations,* pg.60, #7)

Example 2:
Domain: Language Development and Communication (LDC)
Goal: LDC-12: Children begin to develop knowledge of the alphabet and the alphabetic principle. (*Foundations,* pg.108)
Observation: This child makes some sound-to-letter matches, using letter name knowledge. (LDC-12h)

Now, you try it!

What are possible next steps? What strategies might you use in order to help children move to the next level on the developmental continuum? (*Foundations,* pg.110)