

Introduction

The Guiding Principles of NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development

Effective use and implementation of NC Foundations begins with an understanding of the essence of the document. The 10 Guiding Principles provide the evidence-based rationale for the entire document. Understanding the Guiding Principles provides a wide overview of developmentally appropriate early childhood classroom practice. This resource can serve as a quick reference for helping teachers develop a greater understanding of NC Foundations, the standard course of study for Pre-K. Mentors and Evaluators can support their teacher's understanding of the purpose and intent of NC Foundations and its importance in planning and understanding where children are on the continuum.

Contents of this Resource

- Description of Guiding Principles 1-10
- Concrete classroom examples with photos
- Practical Strategies for implementation
- Reflection questions for deeper understanding



Alignment to Standards

Guiding Principle	NC Teaching Standard	Alignment
#1- Development and learning occurs across the full continuum.	1, 3, 4, 5	Promotes the development of the whole child
#2- Each child is unique.	1, 2, 4, 5	Valuing unique differences in how children learn
#3- Development occurs in predictable patterns but is often uneven.	1, 2, 3, 5	Understanding development and applying strategies to support individual children
#4- Children's learning is integrated and must address all domains.	1, 3, 4, 5	Integrated approach to address all developmental domains
#5- Many factors influence a child's development.	1, 2, 5	Promoting family partnerships and collaboration to gain understanding of children's experiences and interests
#6- Each child develops within a culture.	1, 2, 3, 5	Embrace and include children and their families
#7- Nurturing and responsive relationships are essential.	1, 2, 4, 5	Build relationships to support children's learning
#8- Children are active learners.	1, 3, 4, 5	Intentionally planning on-going experiences to promote hands-on learning, investigation and discovery
#9- All children can learn and make progress.	2, 3, 4, 5	Appreciates and values individual differences by modifying appropriately and holding high expectations
#10- Children with disabilities learn best in inclusive settings.	1, 2, 4, 5	Utilize inclusive practices to ensure all children are successful

#1

Guiding Principle: Development and learning across the full continuum from birth to five years is important

Learning and development begin before birth and continue throughout life. Each stage of a young child's development makes an important contribution to later success. Good prenatal care and high-quality experiences throughout the early childhood period are essential. Teachers and caregivers can use Foundations as a guide to provide positive learning experiences for young children of all ages, starting at birth and continuing through the time children enter kindergarten.

Ideas for Guiding Practice

APL Each child approaches learning in their own way. APL-1m: Discover things that interest them and seek to share them with others. (pg. 30)

ESD Children's emotional and social development affects their development in all domains. ESD-4p: Demonstrate social skills when interacting with other children (turn-taking, conflict resolution, sharing). (pg. 57)

LDC Teachers can use a variety of words, describe what the children are doing, and show interest by listening and making eye contact on the child's level. LDC-2n Initiate and participate in conversations related to interests of their own or the persons they are communicating with. (pg. 94)

CD Teachers can promote cognitive development by providing interesting materials and encourage using them in new ways. Plan and complete artistic creations such as drawings, paintings, collages, and sculptures. (pg. 128)



This teacher has provided these children with a variety of high-quality learning experiences to promote positive learning outcomes. A variety of blocks, tools, pans, and balls has created an opportunity for the children to build a system of ramps together. The teacher understands that each stage of a child's development makes an important contribution to later success.

Practical Strategies

- Provide children with the means to represent their ideas with more than one type of material or medium (e.g., painting, drawing, blocks).
- Provide plenty of time for children to explore and play at their own pace.
- Encourage children to talk about and/or share their creative expressions with others.
- Engage children in conversations in small groups so you are able to monitor their understanding.
- Display children's artwork on their eye level on a rotating basis, along with other items of beauty.

Reflection Questions

- How can you build on children's interest? How might you extend their thinking and learning?
- What types of art materials/experiences might you provide children with to promote creative expression?
- How might you provide opportunities for children to demonstrate the social skills of turn-taking, conflict resolution and sharing?

#2

Guiding Principle: Each child is unique

Children's development results from a combination of many factors, such as the characteristics they are born with, the culture they live in, and their experiences in early care and education programs. All children grow and thrive in the context of dependable relationships that provide love and nurturance, security, and responsive interactions.



Home Living is a great center for children to build relationships and express themselves. Create opportunities for children to interact with others who have varying characteristics and abilities, identifying and pointing out areas in which they share common interests.



This teacher created a t-shirt pattern and used the children's pictures to create family t-shirts. Promoting respect and appreciation for each child's culture and each child's a family.

Practical Strategies

- Greet each of them by name daily. Through smiles or friendly gestures, show them that you are happy they are there.
- Help children identify themselves as unique individuals and as members of different groups (e.g., create and display family photo books; family tree, etc...)
- Provide children with adequate time to fully explore materials.
- Provide materials reflective of diverse cultures, abilities, and family structures.
- Create an environment of trust and support in which children feel free to express themselves.

Reflection Questions

- What strategies do you use to get to know your children?
- How do you use information about your children to help you design your room? or Plan activities?
- How do you involve your families in getting to know your children?
- How do you support children's differences?
- What are ways you build relationships with your children and their families?

Ideas for Guiding Practice

ESD ESD-1 Self Identity - Encourage your children to express themselves, showing and telling about themselves (pg. 52) ESD-4 Teacher interacts positively with children. Support children as they play and interact with other children, and adults should demonstrate social skills. (pg. 57)

APL Provide opportunities to celebrate each child's uniqueness and encourage diversity. By dancing, singing, and playing together they can build classroom community. By reading children's stories, it can create confidence and help the children learn about each other. APL-4 Demonstrates creativity, imagination and inventiveness. Plan play scenarios, stories, or songs that encourage self-expression. (p. 35)

LDC

Encourage children to describe their family, home, or community. Expand on what they say and ask open-ended questions. LDC-2 Participates in conversations with peers, adults in variety of groups (small, whole, one-on-one) Be intentional when asking questions to learn more about their unique world. (pg. 95)

#3

Guiding Principle: Development occurs in predictable patterns but an individual child's developmental progress is often uneven across different stages and across developmental domains

Even though each child is unique, there are some predictable steps or stages of development. One ability or skill usually develops before another, and skills that develop earlier often are the foundation for skills that develop later. Children vary a great deal, however, in when and how they reach each stage, and they may make more progress in one area of development than another.

Ideas for Guiding Practice

ESD ESD-4t Play and interact cooperatively with other children. (pg. 57)

APL APL-8h Focus on age-appropriate activities for short period of time, even with interruptions. (pg. 43)

APL-9e-k Children persist at challenging activities. (pg. 44)

CD CD-2s Introduce ideas or actions in play based on previous knowledge or experience. (pg. 122)

LDC Children using this center will communicate with each other, listening and expressing their own ideas.
LDC-2j Initiate and carry on conversations and ask questions about things that interest them. (pg. 94)



Four children are working together in the block center to build a zoo. Two children take the lead and the other two children follow. The teacher facilitates the play in the beginning, asks many questions, then leaves to check on children in other centers. There is a lot of discussion about details being added, where to place things, and what the animals are doing. This is the final structure the children created.

Practical Strategies

- Guide planning and decision making based on children's developmental levels.
- Ask questions that provoke children's thinking.
- Keep children's developmental levels and individual needs in mind when facilitating play.
- Create and/or add challenges so that a task goes a bit beyond what a child can already do.
- Report and communicate children's progress with families and specialists serving those with special needs.

Reflection Questions

- How could you use Foundations to develop strategies that would support each child in his/her individual development?
- Consider children's approaches to play and learning. How might you facilitate children's play and scaffold their learning?
- What questions might you ask that provoke children's thinking?
- How might you create and/or add a challenge?
- How can children's participation and involvement in this activity be assessed?

#4

Guiding Principle: Young children's learning is interconnected across domains

Young children's learning is integrated across different areas of development, so learning experiences provided for children, must address all domains.

Ideas for Guiding Practice

ESD Children can interact with their peers while using the sensory table. ESD-4k-o Intentionally plan activities that encourage the development of friendships, social interaction and collaboration (pg. 57)

APL Sensory tables provides an opportunity for children to explore and seek information about the materials provided.

APL-1j-l & 2i-j Use children's natural curiosity to guide opportunities for active exploration (pg. 30-31)

CD Children are using their senses to construct knowledge about the world around them.

CD-1-h-j Plan activities that engage all five senses (pg. 121)

CD-2p-t Construct scenarios requiring predication and problem solving (pg. 122)

HPD Sensory tables foster the development of fine motor and hand-eye coordination. HPD-4l-o & HPD-5j-l Opportunities for gross and fine motor play (pg.75)

LDC Children using this center will communicate with each other, listening and expressing their own ideas.

LDC-2i-k Engage and encourage children in conversation across settings (pg. 95)



How can the sensory table foster children's development across all domains of learning?

Practical Strategies

- Create an environment that invites exploration and problem solving
- Add books and writing materials to all areas of the classroom
- Add opportunities for; counting, patterning, and measuring
- Consider varied learning styles when planning for learning opportunities across domains
- Ask families to provide culturally relevant items to use to help all children relate
- Plan for possible modifications to support diverse learners; alternate materials, gloves for sensory needs, or signs translated into home language

Reflection Questions

- What opportunities for learning across domains are present?
- How can I embed additional domains of development?
- How can learning be enriched through teacher-child interactions?
- What materials can be added to enrich opportunities for children?

#5

Guiding Principle: Many factors influence a child's development (characteristics, customs, beliefs of the family, culture they live in, experiences within the family)

Ideas for Guiding Practice

ESD ESD-2m Try new activities and attempt new challenges (pg. 53)

ESD-4o Show ease and comfort in their interactions with familiar children (pg. 57)

APL APL-4l Choose to participate in an increasing variety of familiar and new experiences (pg. 38)

CD CD-8d Show acceptance of people who are different from themselves as well as people who are similar (pg. 133)

LDC LDC-4j Use language and nonverbal clues to communicate thoughts, beliefs, feelings and intentions. (pg. 96)

LDC-7p Use a growing vocabulary that includes many different kinds of words and expresses ideas clearly (pg. 99)

Practical Strategies

- Create a positive classroom environment that values each child and their culture
- Provide “wait time” for children who may need more time to respond
- Intentionally select books that represent different cultures
- Model acceptance of people that are similar and different than children
- Pair visuals with print when possible (class rules, charts, signs, pictures, routines)
- Provide children with many opportunities to express themselves in a variety of ways

Reflection Questions

- What are some ways you encourage and include children/families' home language and culture in your classroom?
- How can you encourage and support children's conversations, co-operative play, and friendships?
- How might you introduce or preview new material for children who may need extra support?



Two children are playing in the dramatic play area. The teacher has placed picture/word cards to encourage children in making a grocery list. One child is looking at the picture, naming what is on the card and what she needs to buy at the grocery store. The other child appears to “watch” from a short distance away from the table with her eyes on the cards. How might a teacher encourage both children in back-and-forth conversation or pretend play about going to the grocery store?



Inclusion of a family wall or class made books that have the children's family photos or stories included can encourage the children to talk about their homes and traditions. Intentionally including all children and families supports the creation of the classroom community and helps the children to accept persons who are different from themselves.

#6

Guiding Principle: Each child develops within a culture

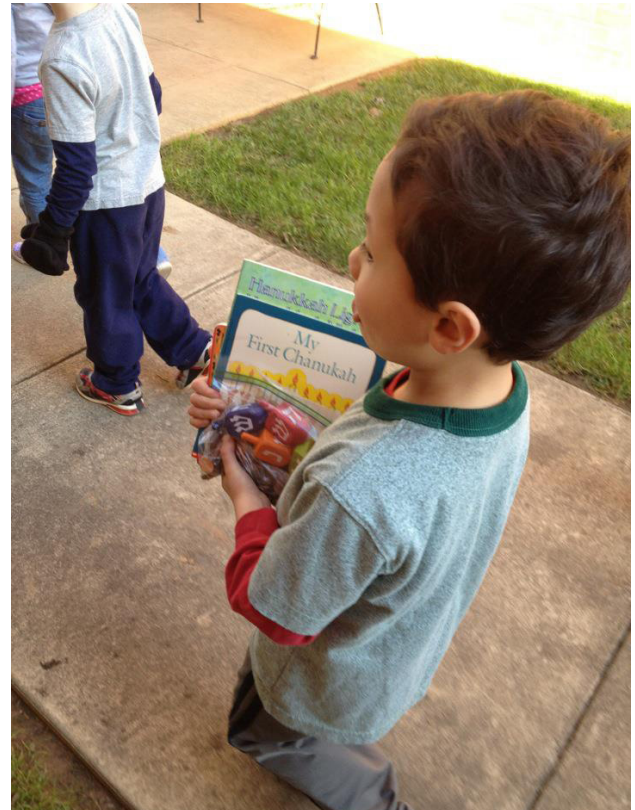
Different backgrounds bring a wealth of strengths, knowledge, and values. A family's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors impact their child's development. A respectful and consistent relationship between home and school are essential for providing the best care for each child.

Practical Strategies

- Family surveys that encourage sharing traditions and culture awareness
- Guests or field trips that encourage community awareness and connections
- Classroom books that support storytelling, shared experience, photos of families, or classroom traditions
- Dramatic play includes using a variety of roles and props
- Storytelling is encouraged and the child's language is recorded accurately
- Singing a wide variety of songs, including those from different cultures
- Group time should include complex sentences, responding to questions, showing emotion, participating in conversation, relating interests, comparing experiences, and communication in home language
- Writing opportunities represent the individual's thoughts and ideas with drawings and letters

Reflection Questions

- What tools could be used to find out more information about the families in my classroom?
- What can I do to help students become more accepting and supporting of differences?
- How can I ensure that the classroom environment represents all the students and their families?
- How can our classroom avoid stereotypes?



This child is bringing his Chanukah books and dreidels to share with his class. How can children sharing their family traditions with their classroom support the community of learners?

Ideas for Guiding Practice

ESD Shared experiences provide a chance to promote positive self-identity, growth in confidence, form relationships, and to establish themselves as a member of the classroom community.

ESD-1p Express awareness that they are members of different groups (pg. 52)

APL Through shared cultures children can actively seek to understand the world around them.

APL-3u Demonstrate their cultural values and rules through play (p. 34)

CD Children sharing traditions demonstrate knowledge of their role in the classroom, home, and community. They recognize their similarities and differences between themselves and others. CD 6-9 (p. 131-134)

LDC LDC-3g Ask specific questions to learn more about their world, understand tasks, and solve problems. (pg. 95)

#7

Guiding Principle: Nurturing and responsive relationships are essential for healthy growth and development

Building relationships should be the priority. To connect with children, we must be sensitive to their cognitive and emotional needs. Create a classroom community where children feel safe, that promotes their sense of wonder, and includes their family. When we include the children and families in planning and support, we are establishing a child-centered and nurturing environment.



Both teachers are working in small groups not only to work on specific goals but also taking the time to have meaningful conversations with the children.

Practical Strategies

- Schedule home visits and phone calls
- Connect with children. Be authentic and genuine through actions like smiling, making eye contact, and having social conversations with students.
- Play games, singsongs, team build. Kids that enjoy learning become lifelong learners. Make school fun!
- Help children feel like they share ownership of the room.

Reflection Questions

- How do you encourage children to share their creative expression?
- What are some ways you support your children through understanding differences?
- What are some activities you can implement that reflect similarities and differences among the children and families within the classroom?
- How do you include families when developing children's goals?
- How do address values and roles with diverse families?

Ideas for Guiding Practice

ESD ESD-6 Children identify and manage feelings and are supported in expressing a range of emotions, using words or signs to express and manage feelings. (p. 61)

ESD-7 Children recognize and respond to the needs and feelings of others. Teach children to communicate concern for others and strategies to help support their friends. (p. 62)

CD CD-6 Demonstrate knowledge of relationships. Involve children in school and community services projects. Encourage children to be active members in their classroom family. (p. 131)

CD-7 Recognize that they are members of different groups/Encourage the importance of family and community within the classroom. (p. 132)

CD-8 Talk about differences, different family structure-not all families look the same. Classroom families and the differences within a school.

#8

Guiding Principle: Children are active learners and learn through play

Children need hands on learning experiences to develop the skills and knowledge described in Foundations. They learn by doing, and they need time to practice what they are learning, to ask questions, to investigate, and to use what they are learning in their everyday activities.

Ideas for Guiding Practice

ESD ESD-2m Try new activities and attempt new challenges (pg. 53)

APL APL-2j Use all available senses to explore world around them (pg. 31)

APL-3r Develop and sustain more complex pretend play...with peers (pg. 34)

APL-8i Remain engaged in more complex activities they have chosen (pg. 43)

CD CD-1h Explore objects, tools and materials systematically to learn about their properties (pg. 121)

LDC LDC-7p Use a growing vocabulary (pg. 99)



Children are involved in a long-term study of buildings. The teacher added tools, props, and blue print books to her building area to promote children's building. She modeled their use to encourage children's building, writing and drawing along with critical thinking and problem solving skills as they planned and tweaked their building plans. The child is telling the teacher about her additions she made to her rainbow building.

Practical Strategies

- Plan lessons over an extended period of time
- Provide un-interrupted time for children to be invested in their play
- Change materials regularly to encourage discovery, engagement and participation
- Plan for hands-on learning experiences using variety of materials/methods
- Promote integrated use of materials (i.e. add writing materials/books)

Reflection Questions

- How can you encourage, acknowledge and support children's complex play?
- What are some authentic learning experiences you might plan in dramatic play?
- What are some ways to encourage children to document what they are learning overtime (blocks structures, stories, and writings/drawings) to reflect children's growing knowledge and skills?
- How do you promote children's curiosity by using open-ended questions to encourage children's critical thinking and possible next steps?

#9

Guiding Principle: All children can learn and make progress in the areas defined in Foundations

All children, no matter what their circumstances, can learn and make progress along the continuum of Developmental Indicators. Children with disabilities may demonstrate their capabilities in different ways than other children, perhaps with modifications in the learning environment or working toward Developmental Indicators at a lower age level. Likewise, children who are learning English in addition to another language at home will make progress on the same Developmental Indicators as English-speaking children, particularly if they are in an early education setting where adults use their home language. Foundations is designed to be used with all children.



The topic of study is buildings. The teacher sets up materials in the art center to encourage children to work together while making a buildings mural. Contact paper is used to help the materials stay in place and/or stick together. Children are encouraged to talk to one another while thinking of the shapes of buildings and how they might create buildings using the materials provided. A group of five children begin to explore the materials. As new children enter the center, they are permitted to add and/or take away to the structure(s) already created.

Practical Strategies

- Provide plenty of time for children to explore and play at their own pace.
- Consider children's cultures, home lives, and experiences.
- Pay attention to children's emotional and social cues and respond positively and consistently.
- Encourage children to try using the materials in different ways.

Reflection Questions

- How do you support and guide children's differences?
- In what ways can you modify your expectations for individual children?
- How could you use the developmental continuum to monitor progress of children?
- How can you use Foundations to guide your instruction?

Ideas for Guiding Practice

ESD ESD-2m Try new activities and attempt new challenges. (p.53)

ESD-4k Demonstrate social skills when interacting with other children. (pg. 57)

APL APL-2k Purposely try different ways of doing things to see what and how they work. (p.31)

APL-4n Use materials or actions in increasingly varied and resourceful ways to represent experiences or ideas. (p.35)

CD CD-12i Use 2- and 3-dimensional shapes to create pictures, designs, or structures. (pg. 140)

LDC LDC-5d Talk to themselves and others about what they are "working on," what they are doing... (pg. 97)

#10

Guiding Principle: Children with disabilities learn best in inclusive settings

Children with disabilities will make the most progress developmentally, socially, and academically when appropriate special education services are provided in inclusive settings. Children with and without disabilities learn from one another in inclusive settings. Inclusive settings where education and support are individualized to each child will benefit all children, including children with and without disabilities.

Ideas for Guiding Practice

APL Brief opportunities for children to practice focusing on an activity are helpful, but their attention spans are short. APL-8h Focus on age-appropriate activities for a short period of time, even with interruptions (e.g. another child sitting nearby is laughing and talking). (pg. 43)

LDC From birth children are learning how to communicate, but children with disabilities may need extra support. LDC-4j Speak clearly enough to be understood by familiar adults and children. (pg. 96)

ESD Children develop a positive understanding of themselves and others. ESD-3o Given time, form positive relationships with new teachers or caregivers. (pg. 56)

ESD Children learn important skills from friendships. ESD-4l Form and maintain friendships with a few other children. (pg. 57)



The photo above displays the specialist conducting in-class services in an inclusive setting for one of the children with an IEP. The teacher and specialist are partners in integrating lessons in the classroom learning environment for the benefit of all children.

Practical Strategies

- Ask probing questions when children appear to be losing interest in an activity to help them stay focused.
- Use visual cues such as props, demonstrations, and gestures to help children understand instructions, especially children who are just beginning to learn English and children with disabilities who have limited language skills.
- Create opportunities for children to interact with others who have varying abilities, identifying areas in which they share a common interest.
- Welcome families into the classroom to share their cultures, traditions, and talents.

Reflection Questions

- How might you create opportunities for children to interact with others who have varying abilities?
- How can children progress developmentally, socially and academically with the provision of special education services in inclusive settings?
- How can families ensure that their vision of their child's success in inclusive settings be supported?