



Infant Toddler Childcare: From Science to Practice To Policy

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We now appreciate the importance of early life experiences, as well as the inseparable and highly interactive influences of genetics and environment, on the development of the brain and the unfolding of human behavior.

What's New

During the first two years of life the right hemisphere of the brain dominates early brain development. It builds crucial structures and pathways of emotional functioning that serve as the fundament for future emotional and social activity which serve as the bedrock for the language and intellectual development that follows.

Emotions Driving Learning

Emotional competence establishes the foundation for success in all other developmental domains. It is the pleasure and delight that babies get from interaction with people that drive them to relate to people more frequently and more skillfully. Emotional motive drives skill development.

What's New

Intellectual and language development are stimulated by and cannot be segregated from early emotional development and in fact build on and are informed by the first interactions babies have with their primary caregivers.

What's New

What is created during the first two years of life is a brain structure which influences children's approach to learning including such critical factors as:

- a child's use of relationships in learning,
- the confidence of a child to engage in the challenge of learning,
- the ability of a child to persist while learning, and
- the alacrity to use adult models for learning.

What's New

Early relationships are so crucial to the map of the brain that, after a caregiver's provision of basic needs for food, health and safety, they are the primary environmental ingredient for healthy brain development.

What's New

The quality of the care babies receive from their primary caregivers influences the babies ability to successfully or unsuccessfully:

- attach to other human beings,
- regulate their impulses,
- learn how to communicate with others, and
- search for an intellectual understanding of the world into which they are born.

What's New

The early development of emotional foundation is directly influenced, either positively or negatively, by the tenor of the babies interactions with those who are the principal providers of their care. The quality of what happens to babies during day-to-day care must be seen as of prime importance to the child's future functioning.

Humans in Relationships Regulate One Another

“The mammalian nervous system depends for its neurophysiologic stability on a system of interactive coordination, wherein steadiness comes from synchronization with nearby attachment figures.”

From “A General Theory of Love” by Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, & Richard Lannon

Humans in Relationships Regulate One Another

The reciprocal process occurs simultaneously: the first person regulates the physiology of the second, even as he himself is regulated. . . . Together they create a stable, properly balanced pair of organisms.

From “A General Theory of Love” by Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, & Richard Lannon

Emotion Regulation of Infants

“ . . . Effective regulation of the infant is only possible within a supportive caregiving system. . . . By providing appropriate and changing stimulation in response to perceptions of infant state, moods, and interests, caregivers not only help keep arousal within manageable bounds, but they also entrain the infant’s own capacities for regulation.”

Source: Sroufe, L. A., Egeland, B., Carlson, E. A., & Collins, W. A. (2005). The development of the person: The Minnesota study of risk and adaptation from birth to adulthood. New York: The Guilford Press.

Emotion Regulation of Toddlers

“ . . .the adaptation of the toddler period remains fundamentally a dyadic adaptation. . . . as [is] true for infants, toddlers require responsive and consistent involvement by caregivers to remain regulated. . . . [Toddlers] are not capable of self regulation, but within a supportive relationship, they are capable of ‘guided self-regulation’.”

Source: Sroufe, L. A., Egeland, B., Carlson, E. A., & Collins, W. A. (2005). The development of the person: The Minnesota study of risk and adaptation from birth to adulthood. New York: The Guilford Press.

Definitions of Responsiveness

- Contingent
- Appropriate
- Prompt

Source: Bornstein, M, & Bornstein, H. (1995). Caregivers' responsiveness and cognitive development in infants and toddlers: Theory and research. In P. L. Mangione (Ed.), *Infant/toddler caregiving: A guide to cognitive development and learning*. Sacramento: CDE Press.

Responsive, Reciprocal Relationships with Young Children

In a responsive, reciprocal relationship, the adult's image of the child is:

- Someone who is competent for her or his age and stage
- Someone who looks to the adult for nurturance and guidance
- Someone with whom to share meaning
- Someone who is capable of cooperating in a relationship with an adult and who thrives when given the opportunity to do so

Responsive, Reciprocal Relationships with Young Children

The adult focuses on:

- Dialogue that fosters sharing attention with the child
- Dialogue that is not intrusive or demanding, but gives the child time and space to solve problems
- Dialogue that engages the child in learning and meaning making
- Dialogue that communicates respect

Responsive Relationships are Spontaneous and Resonant

“Two people become companions on a mutually created journey through time. Interpersonal communication can be seen in spontaneous, resonant communication that flows freely and is balanced between continuity, familiarity, and predictability on one side and flexibility, novelty, and uncertainty on the other. Neither partner of a dyad is fully predictable, yet each is quite familiar.”

Siegel, D. J. (1999). The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are. New York: The Guilford Press.

The Creation of Shared Meaning

- Individual meaning presented to others.
- Subjective acceptance by others of your point of view.
- Development of concept of common meaning.
- Negotiation of meaning.

The Importance of Responsiveness in Relationships

“‘Feeling felt’ may be an essential ingredient in attachment relationships. Having the sense that someone else feels one’s feelings and is able to respond contingently to one’s communication may be vital to close relationships”

Siegel, D. J. (1999). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are*. New York: The Guilford Press.

What the Baby Learns about Self from Interaction

- I am listened to or not.
- What I choose to do is valued or it isn't.
- How I express my emotions is accepted or it isn't.
- I am allowed to explore or I am not.
- Mostly my needs are met or they are not.

Source: Lally, J. R.

Quality of Care for Infants and Toddlers

Quality of care ultimately boils down to the quality of the relationship between the child care provider or teacher and the child.”

Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development.*

Section II

Context For Care



The Context for Quality

Care provided in safe, interesting, and intimate settings where children have the time and opportunity to establish and sustain secure and trusting relationships with other children and with knowledgeable caregivers who are responsive to their needs and interests.

Preferred Policies for Care

- Primary Care
- Small Groups
- Continuity of Care
- Personalized Care
- Cultural Responsiveness
- Attention to Special Needs

PITC Philosophy Statement

- Infant care teachers do not focus on teaching specific lessons. Rather, the focus is on facilitating natural interests and urges to learn.

Infant Care Teacher

- Teaching and caring occur together right from the beginning of life.
- Every moment in which an adult provides care to a young infant is a moment rich with learning.
- Above all, young infants learn about how people respond to their communication and behavior.

Infant Care Teacher

- Infant care teachers treat caregiving routines as learning opportunities, and set the stage by providing developmentally appropriate, safe, inclusive, and engaging environments.
- They also introduce materials, make comments, offer suggestions, and pose questions to children based on observation and study of the children's learning and development.

PITC Approach to Teaching and Caring

- Gives simultaneous attention to the vulnerable and competent sides of the young child. It encompasses the new “three Rs” of childrearing:
 - Responsiveness
 - Relationship
 - Respect

Teacher as Researcher

- Observe document, reflect, and plan
- Listen to children's ideas
- Create learning encounters that build on the children's interests & your observations.
- Engage in daily exchanges with children, teachers, supervisors, families and others.

The Scientist and The Infant

- Both are making sense of things as yet unknown.
- Both investigate, with focused attention, the world around them.
- Both rely on a supportive place to study and work.
- Both use their senses to understand their world.

PITC Approach to Teaching and Caring

Gives simultaneous attention to the vulnerable and competent sides of the young child. It encompasses the new “three Rs” of childrearing:

Responsiveness

Relationship

Respect

Section III

Foundations of Development



California Infant/Toddler Learning & Development Foundations



California Department of Education
Sacramento, 2008

Domains Covered by Infant/Toddler Learning & Development Foundations

- Social-Emotional Development
- Cognitive Development
- Language Development
- Motor and Perceptual Development

Domain: Social-Emotional Development

1. Interaction with adults
2. Relationships with adults
3. Interactions with peers
4. Relationships with peers
5. Identity of self in relation to others
6. Recognition of ability
7. Expression of emotion
8. Empathy
9. Emotion regulation
10. Impulse control
11. Social understanding

Domain: Cognitive Development

1. Cause and effect
2. Spatial relationships
3. Problem solving
4. Imitation
5. Memory
6. Number sense
7. Classification
8. Symbolic play
9. Attention Maintenance
10. Understanding of personal care routines

Domain: Language Development

1. Receptive language
2. Expressive language
3. Communication skills and knowledge
4. Interest in print

Domain: Motor and Perceptual Development

1. Gross motor
2. Fine motor
3. Perceptual



Elevated Cortisol Levels and Daycare

- Margaret Sims at Edith Cowan University in Australia is finding increased cortisol levels of babies in low quality care.
- Harriet Vermeer a Dutch researcher in a review of nine studies of cortisol levels in children at home and in child care found elevated levels in care. She states it was especially notable in children younger than 36 months.

Policy Implications

Any serious educational policy initiative that hopes to impact positively on what is now being called “the achievement gap” for specially defined populations or “school readiness initiatives” for all populations, must begin with an early and emotional focus. Any intervention that starts later than infancy and does not pay serious attention to early emotional development will be bad policy – misdirected in thrust and compensatory in nature.

Policy Implications

Without careful attention to the quality of the emotional and social exchanges a child experiences during the first two years of life any school readiness or achievement gap intervention will be, in fact, starting too late.

What's Needed

During Pregnancy:

- **Health Insurance Coverage**
- **Prenatal Care & Support**

What's Needed

After Pregnancy:

- Extended time period at home with new baby
- Primary and preventive care, such as well baby visits
- Guidance for parents to support children's healthy development
- Developmental screenings to identify physical and behavioral needs
- Special supports for families in crisis

What's Needed

At Child Care:

- Early Education Services
- Partially subsidized quality infant/toddler early education programs regardless of family income.
- Well trained, supervised and fairly compensated teachers
- Quality early intervention services for children with disabilities and other special needs.
- Small Groups
- Low Ratios
- Enriched & Safe Environments
- Caregiver Stability

Early childhood mental health is not the absence of mental illness but rather the presence of a feeling of safety and emotional security, comfort in connecting with trusted others, confidence in one's developmental trajectory, an expectation that dependency needs will be met, and an assumption of one's right to move, explore and communicate.

Expectations for Children

- Amazement
- Marvel
- Excitement
- Invention
- Transformation
- Disorientation
- Reflection
- Imitation
- Surprise
- Observation
- Hypothesizing
- Communication
- Contemplation
- Connection