

Developmentally Appropriate Behavior: Reflection

Use *the Developmentally Appropriate Behavior: A Case Study* about Lena, to answer the following questions. Discuss your responses with a coworker.

1. *What do I know about child development and learning?*

In this case study, Lena is almost 3 years old. What behavior and skills do you expect to observe in children during mealtime at this phase of development?

- *Most children at this phase are able to independently feed themselves using their hands and utensils. They may use a whole-hand grasp, switch between right and left hands, and be quite messy but generally do not need for adults to put food in their mouths.*
- *Children at this phase may still become upset with changes in their routines, especially if they do not understand why.*
- *Children this age often copy the behavior of others.*

2. *What do I know about the individual child?*

Think about Lena's behavior and interests while in the child care program.

- *Lena is a typical and social child and has a variety of interests.*
- *Lena expects the caregivers in the program to feed her, even though they know she is capable of doing this independently.*
- *Lena gets upset when Katherine and the other caregivers do not help her. She eventually eats but despite encouragement, does not use utensils.*

3. *What do I know about the social and cultural context of the children I care for, myself, and my program?*

Think about what you know from the case study and reflect on Lena's family culture and expectations, Katherine, and the child care program.

- *Family Culture: Feeding children well into elementary school is typical for Lena's family. Priya and Simon don't mind when Lena asks for them to feed her. In fact, they think of this as an opportunity to provide nurture and care. The family went through this same situation with their older child, and Ben eventually learned that in program/school environments people use utensils at meals. Priya and Simon don't seem to think of Lena's requests as an issue.*
- *Katherine: It does not seem like Katherine has encountered this behavior before, especially for a child who is capable of doing this skill independently. She finds Priya and Simon's parenting behavior to be odd and she may highly value children learning to be independent. Katherine likely*

has not worked with families who value a more collective and nurturing mealtime, and her own family probably has different mealtime expectations for children this age.

- *Program: It seems like the preschool staff expect children to eat with utensils when they transition to those rooms. Perhaps some staff place judgement on other staff members when children's behavior does not match their program's expectations.*

4. If you were Katherine, how would you respond to Priya and Simon? To Lena's behavior?

- *I would thank Priya and Simon for sharing a bit about their family life and culture. The response of Ben's teachers, when he was in preschool, seemed to encourage him to use utensils at meals without him and the family feeling there was something "wrong" with the way they do things at home. I'd suggest that the child care staff take a similar approach used by Ben's preschool and see how Simon and Priya felt about this.*
- *After the conversation with Lena's family, I would communicate what I learned about the family's values and practices, in addition to what worked for Ben with my teaching team.*
- *During meals, I would make sure utensils were available to Lena and say something like, "Lena, here's your fork and spoon," but not force the issue or draw more attention to it. I would make sure that Lena has plenty of other opportunities to affectionately engage with the staff, such as when she requests to snuggle and read books.*
- *Katherine can take this experience to think more openly about the wide-range of parenting and family practices and reflect on the fact that there is not one right way.*

5. How might Katherine reappraise her thoughts on Lena's family?

- *Instead of thinking about this as odd parenting behavior and questioning the family's ability to help their children learn, Katherine can appreciate that this is an opportunity to learn about the diverse ways families nurture and show affection to their children.*