Introduction: WINGS Curricular Framework

WINGS: The Ideal Curriculum for Children in Preschool

> "If children are offered suitable opportunities to learn, they can do more than just fly; they can soar!"
>
> —Bisa Batten Lewis

What is the WINGS curriculum?

WINGS: The Ideal Curriculum for Children in Preschool is an active and interactive learning plan for effectively organizing and implementing developmentally and culturally appropriate practices based on the interests, needs and skill levels of children from birth to age 5.

WINGS is an acronym for:

Wonder
Interests
Needs
Goals
Skills

These elements provide a foundation for organizing and implementing developmentally and culturally appropriate learning experiences for young children.

The Story of the Bumblebee

It was "known" for many years that the bumblebee couldn't fly. It had been mathematically "proven" by scientists that its **WINGS** were too small and its body was too large. According to the laws of physics and aerodynamics, it was impossible for the bumblebee to fly.
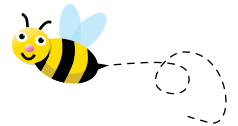
One problem emerged refuting this scientific proof—the bumblebee was indisputably flying! Fortunately, no one had told the bumblebee that it was doing the impossible; therefore, it just kept on flying!

Years later, around the mid 1970's, scientists announced that they had proven that the bumblebee could fly after all.

Thank goodness we didn't tell the bumblebee. Had it known that it was impossible for it to fly, it might have never tried. If it had never tried, the experts would have been proven right!

About **WINGS**

Philosophy

While motivational speakers, coaches, and mentors often reference "The Story of the Bumblebee" or "The Flight of the Bumblebee" to encourage adults to do what seems to be the impossible, **WINGS** places the story at its core to constantly remind early childhood educators that EVERY CHILD CAN LEARN. It's the job of the teachers to mix the right ingredients to encourage learning to happen. Therefore, teachers help children to take flight.

WINGS Defined: Wonder, Interests, Needs, Goals, & Skills

W*onder*

Wonder is the creativity component of **WINGS**. Creativity is the formation of a new idea or the unique means of solving a problem. Young children are creative by nature and often initiate new learning experiences when they question or wonder:

- ▶ "What is this?"
- ▶ "What does it do?"
- ▶ "What would happen if . . . "

Wonder is the impetus for exploration. Therefore, when children become curious about the world around them, including the people and things within it, they are intrinsically

> **WINGS** defines *wonder* as anything that causes children to think or speculate curiously, admire, be amazed or in awe, surprised, or puzzled.

motivated to investigate, examine, explore, or **create**. A learning environment that encourages and enables children to explore new ideas and approach problem–solving on their own in a safe and supportive setting, nurtures creativity and natural curiosity. A creative climate extends problem–solving and critical thinking abilities far past childhood.

I*nterests*

Appropriate learning experiences for young children include each of their interests, along with the interests of the adults (teachers). Unlike themes, interests are personally meaningful to the children, as well as the teachers in the classroom. The personal interests of both the teachers and children are incorporated within the learning environment.

> **WINGS** defines *interests* as anything that is personally meaningful to or draws the attention of the adults and children within the classroom.

Wonder vs. Interests

Wonder and Interests vary in that young children may show or express basic interests, but wonder about different aspects of those interests. Those basic interests and the characteristics children wonder about shape the content that is included in the learning environment.

Examples of incorporating Wonder and Interests:

Interests	Wonder
Pumpkins	Types/Colors of pumpkins; how/where pumpkins grow; what are pumpkins used for?; what can you make with pumpkins?
Flowers	Flower seeds; colors/types of flowers; what grows from flowers?
Snow	How/Where it snows; what can be made with snow (snowmen, snow cones . . .)?

Although adult interests are included in the learning environment, the content of the adult's basic interests is based on what is appropriate for and relevant to the children. More specifically, what the children wonder about those particular interests is most important. In a developmentally and culturally appropriate classroom, there is a balance of the children's and teacher's interests.

It is not a requirement that wonder or interests be verbally expressed by the children. As children interact and explore, wonder and interests may be identified directly or indirectly by the adults in the classroom.

Unlike themes or units, wonder and interests included in the classroom have no designated length of time. As long as the children and adults in the classroom are interested in or wonder about the content included in the environment, it is considered relevant and therefore remains.

Needs

Before a child can progress from Point A to Point B, sometimes there are necessary conditions or situations that must be addressed. These conditions or situations may be developmental, cultural, or exceptional. **WINGS** defines such conditions or situations as needs and recommends that they are addressed individually and with care as they are identified.

Children learn best when learning experiences are based on their individual needs. Learning connections must be facilitated with experience and prior learning in mind, along with what is socially relevant, personally meaningful, and intellectually engaging for each child.

> **WINGS** defines *needs* as developmental, cultural, or exceptional conditions or situations that must be addressed for proper development and learning to occur.

Goals

Goals are intentions that state the difference between where children are and how far they can go. Before learning experiences can be planned for children, individual cognitive (intellectual), physical, social, and emotional goals must be set by:

- Assessing what a child already knows and can do
- Evaluating what a child needs to learn
- Planning activities to facilitate learning needs
- Assessing what a child has learned in the interim
- Evaluating the success of the planned activities
- Then planning again.

WINGS defines *goals* as intentional statements differentiating where children are intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally—as well as how far they can go.

> **WINGS** defines *goals* as intentional statements differentiating where children are intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally—as well as how far they can go.

Skills

Skills are naturally acquired abilities and talents. Each child is born with these abilities and talents, which become more evident as they grow and develop. Interacting with people and actively exploring in a developmentally and culturally appropriate environment enhances natural skills and enables children to learn new skills.

> **WINGS** defines *skills* as naturally acquired abilities and talents that become more evident as children grow and develop.

Goals vs. Skills

WINGS addresses the specifics of goals (objectives) in the skill component of the curriculum. Once individual goals have been set for children and identified groups, teachers can develop a plan to reach set goals by narrowing the steps in the form of precise objectives or skills.

Examples of goals and objectives/skills:

Goal	Objective/Skill
The child will be familiar with numbers.	The child will be able to rote count from 1 to 3.
The child will know the letters of the alphabet.	The child will be able to recite the letters in her name.

WINGS Curricular Framework

W Wonder	I Interests	N Needs	G Goals	S Skills
Anything that causes children to think or speculate curiously, admire, be amazed or in awe, surprised, or puzzled.	Anything that is personally meaningful to or draws the attention of the adults and children within the classroom.	Developmental, cultural, or exceptional conditions or situations that must be addressed for proper development and learning to occur.	Intentional statements differentiating where children are intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally—as well as how far they can go.	Naturally acquired abilities and talents that become more evident as children grow and develop.

Is the WINGS Curriculum Effective?

Effective Early Childhood Curriculum

An effective early childhood curriculum is "thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children." (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2004, p. 2)

How *WINGS: The Ideal Curriculum for Children in Preschool* Meets the Eight Indicators of Effective Curriculum

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), there are *eight indicators of an effective curriculum*.

1. **Children Are Active and Engaged.**
   The WINGS Curriculum is based on the premise that "engaging primary–aged children in active and interactive play is *the way* of implementing the curriculum." In a WINGS classroom, children are busy in learning centers actively learning content from various subjects that has been incorporated within single activities.

2. **Goals Are Clear and Shared by All.**
   The WINGS Curriculum includes learning goals and skills for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, which are reinforced in the WINGS Developmental Goals & Skills for infants, 1–year–olds, 2–year–olds, 3–year–olds, and 4– & 5–year–olds. These goals and skills are visually reinforced in the classroom on charts, posters, bulletin boards and labels, and with parents on daily/weekly communication forms and assessment and evaluation instruments.

3. **Curriculum Is Evidence–Based.**
   WINGS: The Ideal Curriculum for Children in Preschool is based on sound research and developmental theories that have, for decades, offered principal perspectives on how children develop and learn. In addition to historical perspectives, such as those of Vygotsky, Erikson, Piaget, Gardner, and Maslow, *WINGS* bases its curricular structure on modern research on brain development and emergent curriculum. This modern research offers new points of view on how to make learning meaningful and socially relevant according to the ever–changing interests and needs of young children. Synthesizing sound historical perspectives with relevant modern perspectives, *WINGS* provides a solid foundation for organizing a learning environment that is developmentally and culturally appropriate for children in preschool.

4. **Valued Content Is Learned Through Investigation and Focused, Intentional Teaching.**
   The WINGS Curriculum embraces the philosophy that 'play is a child's work.' Incorporating learning goals in an exploratory learning environment, preschool educators are guided through the processes of organizing an appropriate learning environment, establishing daily routines, planning daily/weekly activities, and assessing and evaluating child progress. Daily instruction is based on the curiosity, interests, needs, and developmental goals and skills of the children.

5. **Curriculum Builds on Prior Learning and Experiences.**
   Encouraging preschool educators to facilitate a well–run, purposeful classroom/program responsive to the individual needs of children and their families, WINGS learning environments, routines, and activities are based on what is socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally

meaningful to children. Embracing the belief that 'all children have the ability to learn,' the WINGS Curriculum supports teachers in discovering *how* each child learns best and by implementing appropriate strategies to smooth the progress of learning. The WINGS Developmental Goals & Skills charts and assessment/evaluation instruments build on prior learning and experiences appropriately guiding infants to toddlerhood and toddlers to preschoolerhood.

6. **Curriculum is Comprehensive.**
The WINGS Curriculum incorporates an emergent curricular process promoting the learning of cognitive, physical, social–emotional, and language & literacy content through developmentally and culturally appropriate practice. With the understanding that teachers must assess and evaluate before planning activities that are developmentally and culturally appropriate for young children, the WINGS Curriculum encompasses critical areas of development in the assessment/evaluation and lesson planning processes. Both the assessment/evaluation and planning processes include supporting tools, such as Developmental Goals & Skills Charts, lesson plans, individualized and group assessments, and progress reports from infancy through age five.

7. **Professional Standards Validate the Curriculum's Subject–Matter Content.**
The WINGS Curriculum is aligned with early learning standards by renowned early childhood agencies such as NAEYC, NAECS/SDE, and Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. Standards set forth in quality environment tools, including *The Infant & Toddler Environment Rating Scale* (*ITERS*) and *The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (*ECERS*) were consulted in the development of WINGS curricular content. The WINGS Developmental Goals & Skills and assessment/evaluation instruments meet the recommendations specified in NAEYC's indicators of effectiveness for curriculum and for assessment of young children.

8. **Curriculum Is Likely to Benefit Children.**
The WINGS Curriculum includes hard–copy materials and a CD–ROM with electronic/fillable forms. Display materials, such as labels, posters, signs, and charts are available for visual reinforcement, in addition to a member–only web site for sharing WINGS lessons and activities among preschool educators around the world. New products and services are developed on a regular basis to further support implementation. If executed as intended, the WINGS Curriculum offers continuous occasions for appropriate learning, enabling children to consistently reach new heights.

Effective Assessment Practices

Effective assessment examines young children's strengths, progress, and needs through assessment methods that are "developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, tied to children's daily activities, supported by professional development, inclusive of families, and connected to specific, beneficial purposes: (1) making sound decisions about teaching and learning; (2) identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and (3) helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions." (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2004, p. 2)

According to NAEYC and NAECS/SDE, there are *11 indicators of effective assessment practices*.

How *WINGS: The Ideal Curriculum for Children in Preschool* Meets the 11 Indicators of Effective Assessment Practices

1. **Ethical Principles Guide Assessment Practices.**
   The WINGS Curriculum utilizes assessment for the purposes of examining children's curiosities, interests, needs, goals, and skills. Decisions about children are based on multiple assessment methods.

2. **Assessment Instruments Are Used for their Intended Purposes.**
   Each WINGS assessment tool has a specified purpose and method of use. The WINGS Curriculum offers clear and concise instructions for utilizing each of the instruments. Teachers and parents are encouraged to utilize each assessment tool accordingly.

3. **Assessments Are Appropriate for Ages and Other Characteristics of Children Being Assessed.**
   Each WINGS assessment tool is aligned with sound research on how young children from infancy to age five typically develop and learn.

4. **Assessment Instruments Are in Compliance with Professional Criteria for Quality.**
   The WINGS assessment/evaluation instruments meet the recommendations specified in the indicators of effectiveness for assessment of young children by NAEYC and NAECS/SDE.

5. **What Is Assessed Is Developmentally and Educationally Significant.**
   In addition to individual curiosities, interests, and needs, the WINGS assessment and evaluation tools examine the cognitive, physical, social–emotional, and language & literacy goals/skills of children from infancy to age five.

6. **Assessment Evidence Is Used to Understand and Improve Learning.**
   WINGS assessment and evaluation tools enable preschool educators to plan activities that are developmentally and culturally appropriate for young children.

7. **Assessment Evidence Is Gathered from Realistic Settings and Situations that Reflect Children's Actual Performance.**
   The WINGS Assessment and Evaluation Model is designed to allow preschool educators to gather data during active and interactive play. Given that the learning environment is organized and equipped according to WINGS curricular standards, sufficient performance data is available.

8. **Assessments Use Multiple Sources of Evidence Gathered Over Time.**
   WINGS assessment and evaluation includes ongoing analysis of individual child progress utilizing formative evaluation methods along with a work sampling system.

9. **Screening Is Always Linked to Follow–Up.**
   In regards to child assessment and evaluation, it is the WINGS philosophy to:

   - Assess what a child already knows.
   - Evaluate what a child needs to learn.
   - Plan activities to facilitate learning needs.
   - Assess what a child has learned in the interim.
   - Evaluate the success of the planned activities.
   - Then plan again.

10. **Use of Individually Administered, Norm–Referenced Tests Is Limited.**
    Formal WINGS assessment begins with the collection of individual information/data using the *WINGS Anecdotal Record* and *WINGS Individual Child Portfolio*. Formal assessment continues and formal evaluation begins with the collection and review of information/data using the *WINGS Individualized Assessment* and *WINGS Class/Group Assessment* forms. Formal evaluation is completed using the *WINGS Progress Report*. Data for each assessment instrument is observed and collected during "play."

11. **Staff and Families Are Knowledgeable About Assessment.**
    The WINGS assessment and evaluation system recommends that programs discuss assessment during parent orientation. Parent–teacher conferences are recommended two to three times per year to update parents on their children's progress. Learning accomplishments are printed and sent home in the interim. An array of parent reporting forms are included to keep parents abreast of their children's curiosities, interests, needs, goals, and skills.

Effective Program Evaluation and Accountability Practices

Early childhood programs should be regularly evaluated "in light of program goals, using varied, appropriate, conceptually and technically sound evidence to determine the extent to which programs meet the expected standards of quality and to examine intended, as well as unintended, results." (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2004, p. 2)

The WINGS Curriculum and Effective Program Evaluation and Accountability Practices

Drawing from the progressive work samples collected in the individual child portfolio, interpreted anecdotal records, and individualized assessment form, the *WINGS Progress Report* enables the teacher to review and discuss collected data with parents and to prepare for follow–up planning and assessment. *WINGS Progress Reports* are completed three to four times per year and are shared with parents accordingly. Throughout the school year, teachers share daily/weekly and routine data with parents about their children's progress using the WINGS Assessment and Evaluation System.

> **Staff training should be provided to all teaching staff for effective implementation of the WINGS Assessment and Evaluation System. Ongoing training and support are available at www.WINGScurriculum.com.**

In addition to monitoring individual child progress, early childhood programs should evaluate their success by offering parents the opportunity to examine their quality at least twice per year (in fall and spring). The WINGS Curriculum recommends a helpful program evaluation tool by Child Care Aware for parents seeking quality child care—available at www.childcareaware.org. Early childhood program should use such tools to self–assess/evaluate and plan improvements accordingly.

How Children Develop & Learn

Theoretical Foundation: How Children Develop and Learn

WINGS: The Ideal Curriculum for Children in Preschool is based on sound research and developmental theories that have, for decades, offered principal perspectives on how children develop and learn. In addition to historical perspectives, **WINGS** bases its curricular structure on modern research on brain development and emergent curriculum. This modern research offers new points of view on how to make learning meaningful and socially relevant according to the ever–changing interests and needs of young children. Synthesizing sound historical perspectives with relevant modern perspectives, **WINGS** provides a solid foundation for organizing a learning environment that is developmentally and culturally appropriate for children in preschool.

Growth and Development

Changes in cognitive (intellectual), physical, social, and emotional functions occur over time. These changes may include transformations in size, shape, and activity and may be either progressive (steps forward) or regressive (steps backward).

Cognitive (Intellectual) Development

Cognitive (Intellectual) Development refers to mental processes used to process information, become aware, solve problems, and gain knowledge.

According to Jean Piaget (1896–1980), children develop in stages, which he classified as *four stages of cognitive development*—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operations, and formal operations. Children in preschool fall into Piaget's sensorimotor and preoperational stages.

In the *sensorimotor stage* (birth to 2 years), infants and toddlers recognize themselves as agents of action and begin to act intentionally.

Example: *An older infant may pull a string to set the crib mobile in motion or shake a rattle to make noise.*

In the *preoperational stage* (ages 2–6 years), preschoolers and primary–aged children learn to use language and to represent objects by images and words. Thinking is egocentric (self–centered) causing children at these ages to have difficulty considering the viewpoint of others. Children in this stage are able to classify objects by a single feature.

Example: *A child may sort/group together all the blue blocks regardless of shape or all the square blocks regardless of color.*

Howard Gardner (1943–), in his *theory of multiple intelligences*, proposes that intelligence does not arise from a single unitary quality of the mind. Rather, humans pull from different pools of mental energy to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings. The eight intelligences proposed by Gardner are linguistic, logical–mathematical, spatial, bodily–kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic.

1. *Linguistic intelligence* enables individuals to read, write and speak well.
2. *Logical–mathematical intelligence* includes the ability to analyze problems (deductive reasoning), carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically.
3. *Spatial intelligence* involves the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas.

4. *Musical intelligence* involves skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns.

5. *Bodily–kinesthetic intelligence* is the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements.

6. *Interpersonal intelligence* is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people, allowing people to work effectively with others.

7. *Intrapersonal intelligence* is the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations.

8. *Naturalistic intelligence* enables humans to recognize, categorize and draw upon certain features of the environment.
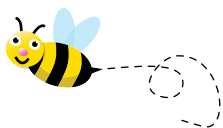
> **WINGS on Cognitive Development:** All children have the ability to learn. Day care providers/preschool teachers must discover *how* each child learns best and implement appropriate strategies to smooth the progress of learning.

Physical Development

Physical Development includes growth and change in a person's body muscles and senses. Motor development (the development of body muscle), the impacts of illness, nutrition, and health are all included in this domain.

There are two types of muscles:
- *Large muscles* are muscles used to perform large body movements, like walking or bending.
- *Small muscles* are muscles used to perform small body movements, like grasping objects or turning pages in a book.

Motor skills are motions carried out when the brain, nervous system, and muscles work together.
- *Gross Motor Skills* are physical skills that involve large body movements.
- *Fine Motor Skills* are physical skills that involve small body movements (usually hands and fingers).

Children normally follow a fairly uniform sequence of motor development; however, the rate of motor progress varies.
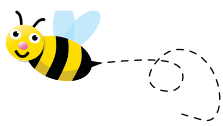
> **WINGS on Physical Development:** Children in the early years use movement and their senses to understand the world around them. Being able to move about and explore in a clean, safe, and appropriate learning environment builds confidence in young children and their abilities.

Social Development

Social Development includes processes related to one's interactions with others—relationships.

According to Albert Bandura's (1925–) *social learning theory*, children learn by imitation of and identification with others, i.e. modeling. If children observe positive, desired behaviors and interactions, they are likely to model, imitate, and adopt the behaviors themselves, hence achieving the desired outcome.

Lev Vygotsky's (1896–1934) *social cognitive theory* complements Bandura's social learning theory. Vygotsky observed that children performed at a higher level with help from an adult than when performing tasks alone. He maintained that the child follows the adult's example and gradually develops the ability to do certain tasks without assistance. Vygotsky called the difference between what a child can do with help and what he or she can do without guidance the *"zone of proximal development"* (ZPD). Two strategies are utilized by teachers who employ ZPD—*scaffolding* (building learning by showing examples) and *reciprocal teaching* (open, turn–taking discussions).

Emotional Development

Emotional Development refers to processes related to feelings and personality. Social and emotional development are closely related, since one's interactions and relationships with others can be vastly affected by one's feelings and personality. Therefore, social and emotional development are often coupled as one domain—social–emotional, emotional–social, or social/emotional development.

Erik Erikson (1902–1994) divided human lifespan into eight categories, each with its own unique time frame and characteristics. According to *Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development*, at each stage of our development, we face the possibility of a negative rather than a positive outcome, leading to a possible crisis. Failing to complete one stage has a negative impact on being able to maneuver well through the remaining stages. However, issues with incomplete stages can be resolved at any time, allowing people to

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygostky's theory of social cognitive development reasons that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (awareness/thinking). Instruction can be made more efficient when learners engage in activities within a supportive environment and receive guidance mediated by appropriate tools. In order to achieve the highest level of development possible, it is recommended that children be exposed to a variety of social situations. Each interaction is considered a learning experience. It is especially important to introduce children to people and ideas that function above their current knowledge level, giving them access to new ideas and concepts. Children's knowledge base can be expanded by guiding them to look for answers by imitating what they see in others or by working as part of a group following instruction.
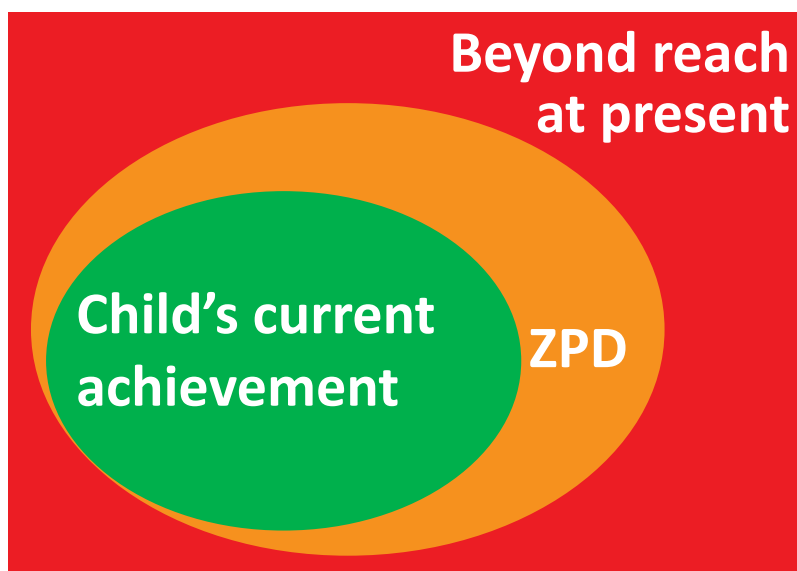
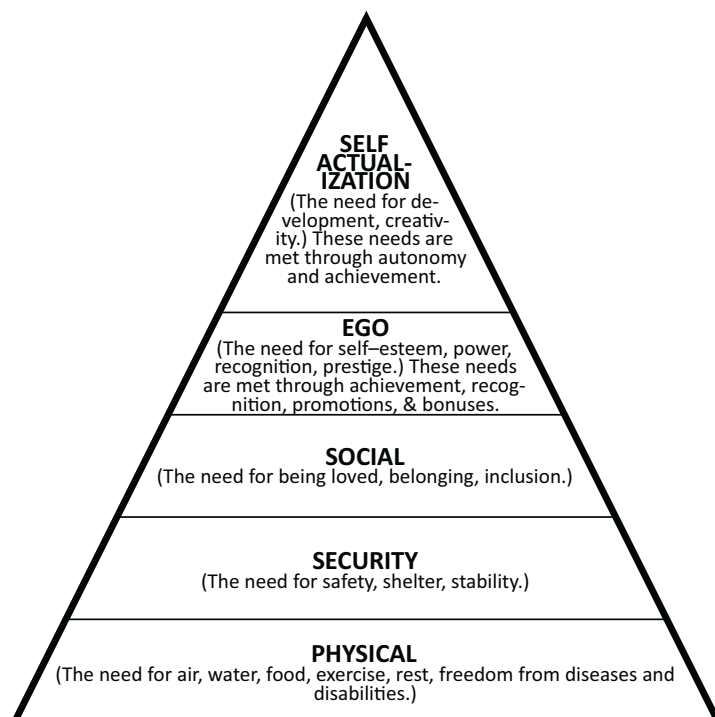**Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

Source: http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/construcitivism.htm#Vygotsky

progress successfully through their lives. During the preschool years, Erikson suggests that children go through three (of the eight) stages of psychosocial development:

1. **Trust vs. Mistrust:** Birth to 18 months is characterized by drive and hope. During this stage, a baby forms his or her first feelings about the world and whether or not it is a safe place based on the level of consistent care provided by the primary caregivers. When trust develops successfully, the child gains a sense of security. However, if this sense of security is not developed, a fear and inner mistrust of the world is formed. Anxiety and insecurity can result in an unsuccessful beginning.

2. **Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt:** 18 Months to 3 Years is characterized by self–control, courage, and will and involves a child's first attempts to become increasingly independent. This decision–making is affected by a child's efforts at independent thinking, which should be supported and encouraged. The child's self–confidence increases, helping to prepare him/her to survive in the real world. Low self–esteem and a tendency to be overly dependent on others can result from negative attempts and unsuccessful transition.

3. **Initiative vs. Guilt:** 3 to 6 Years is characterized by purpose and involves the tendency of children to enjoy expressing their assertiveness by choosing activities, inventing their own solutions to problems and approaching others to socialize. When their efforts are recognized and rewarded, children flourish. However, if they are made to feel unwise or not allowed to even try, they may go through their lives preferring to follow, rather than lead.
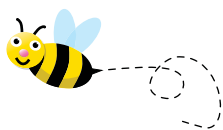
Abraham Maslow's (1908–1970) *hierarchy of needs* is often depicted as a pyramid consisting of five levels: the first lower level is associated with physiological needs, while the top levels are growth needs associated with psychological needs. Deficiency needs must be met first. Once these are met, seeking to satisfy growth needs drives personal growth. The higher needs in this hierarchy only come into focus when the lower needs in the pyramid are satisfied.

Once an individual has moved upward to the next level, needs in the lower level will no longer be prioritized. If a lower set of needs is no longer being met, the individual will temporarily re–prioritize those needs by focusing attention on the unfulfilled needs, but will not permanently regress to the lower level.

SELF ACTUAL-IZATION
(The need for development, creativity.) These needs are met through autonomy and achievement.

EGO
(The need for self–esteem, power, recognition, prestige.) These needs are met through achievement, recognition, promotions, & bonuses.

SOCIAL
(The need for being loved, belonging, inclusion.)

SECURITY
(The need for safety, shelter, stability.)

PHYSICAL
(The need for air, water, food, exercise, rest, freedom from diseases and disabilities.)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Source: http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/facts/96-001.htm

WINGS on Social/Emotional Development: Children learn best by engaging actively with their environment and the people within it. Once children's basic physical and emotional needs are met, they gain confidence in their abilities and therefore perform at higher levels.