

## *Winnicott goes to school: examining early psychological development to inform infant/toddler and preschool practice*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Winnicott's theory of infant psychological development is explored to determine how it can inform the preparation of infant/toddler and preschool teacher candidates. The author examines Winnicott's theory of the psychological stages of dependence to determine how it can provide the knowledge necessary for teachers to establish psychologically appropriate classroom practices in early care settings. A major implication for infant/toddler teachers is the creation of a facilitating environment for infant/mother dyads. Implications for preschool teachers are shown to rest in the knowledge that preschool children are on a continuum moving back and forth between these stages of dependence as they transition into school, wrapping up former stages of development to be who they are now. The author concludes that Winnicott matters to infant/toddler and preschool teachers in the creation of PsyDAP, psychologically developmentally appropriate practice.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Perhaps because of our approaching third NCATE visit, perhaps because of New York State's move to require Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), perhaps because of the encompassing pressure to assess, perhaps because of a recent blog by Nancy Carlson-Paige (professor emerita at Lesley University, Cambridge, Massachusetts: *My View: Obama, Romney need to know one thing about early childhood education---start over* indicating the inappropriateness of educational policy and practice for our youngest children), perhaps just because as an early childhood teaching department we meet regularly and our thinking shifts and changes among multiple foci...we began to wonder if, in our high stakes race to the top, important aspects of early development were being forgotten.

Looking inwardly, our early childhood faculty began to question how we conceptualize early childhood generally and whether we adequately address the psychological needs of young children and of early childhood practitioners across the range of early childhood development. We noticed that early childhood, as it is addressed in our programs, is unofficially divided into three distinct developmental times: infancy and toddlerhood (0-2), preschool (3-4), and school-age (5-7). In the past, most of our undergraduate and graduate early childhood students planned to teach at the preschool or school levels. So it has been at the upper two levels that our emphasis has settled. At present, many of our candidates are being employed as teachers of children under

five. Our former settling has presented an obvious problem: We have been neglecting infancy and toddlerhood both for teacher candidates who want to care for this age group and for our other early childhood teacher candidates who need to know what is essential in the earliest development to enable what is essential later in development. We wondered whether we have also neglected theorists who could enrich our understanding of the psychological needs of children birth to age 3 and forgotten theorists who might speak strongly about these needs.

We decided to start by examining the needs of children under five and we decided to start at the beginning. Based on our own experiences as teachers of young children, we agreed that their sense of who they are and whom they are becoming lies at the heart of infant/toddler development and that their psychological development lies at the center of infant/toddler curriculum. As infants/toddlers come to be emerging authors, mathematicians, scientists, artists who inquire about the world, they seem to function as little philosophers trying to piece together answers to the questions: Who am I? Who are you? How am I connected to this world? (Gopnik 1999, 2009). We knew that children's answers to these questions emerge from the experiences they have in the relationships they form with those who care for them. What we needed was a framework to help us to teach our teacher candidates how this happens. How do young children start out so attached to their mothers and then one day say, "I am!" I am a separate self-relating to you, even as I am connected to you. How does this process of psychological development inform how we prepare early childhood teacher candidates to provide a robust curriculum for infants and toddlers? How can we provide environments that nurture the mental health of young children as they move into their preschool years?

We considered that the pedagogical theorists, more familiar to some of us, were not sufficient for our cause. We decided to look to D. W. Winnicott, who, while forgotten in most of teacher education, might enrich our understanding of, and teaching about, infant and toddler development and care. Winnicott's emphasis on the phases of dependence that the infant experiences to become an independent self might help us and our early childhood teacher candidates to understand the sequence of needs of young children and the practices appropriate in early childhood programs focusing on their care. We decided we would take Nancy Carlson-Paige's advice to start over in our thinking about infant/toddler education and look to the very beginnings of psychological development.

### STARTING AT THE BEGINNING WITH DONALD W. WINNICOTT

As Winnicott traced the phases of dependence experienced by infants from the earliest days of life, he called the concepts that support their psychological development, the maturational *process* and the *facilitating environment*. Winnicott contended every human being is born to grow and develop in a unique direction, *the maturational process*. This unique direction of growth takes place within a *facilitating environment*, which is an environment created by the mother or an adult who is totally devoted to the infant's needs.

After years of playing (Winnicottian term for what happens in analysis) with children in his psychoanalytic practice, Winnicott wondered what was happening in the inner lives of infants as they moved from a state of being totally meshed with their mothers to a time when they placed their mothers outside of themselves to see her as a separate person. Winnicott observed that from the time infants are born, they tend to place their thumbs in their mouths to stimulate feelings in this area for instinctual gratification and at other times, the sucking of the thumb was used in a quiet union. After a few months, many infants, boys and girls, become fond of playing with dolls, teddy bears, or other animals and most mothers allow their infants some special object and expect them to become attached to it, addicted to such objects (Winnicott 1971). Winnicott introduced the term "transitional objects" to distinguish these special objects from other objects in the child's environment. "Transitional objects differ from all other because they contain elements of the past and present and are bridges to the future" (Kestenberg and Weinstein 1978 76).

Once infants reach the state of knowing that they are physically separate from their mothers, ". . . there is an inner reality to these infants that can be rich or poor, at peace or at war" (Winnicott 1971 2). Viewing the development of infants' inner realities as being completely dependent upon conscious or unconscious drives or the contributions internalized from the interpersonal relationships that resolve the needs of these drives was just not enough for Winnicott to explain what he was observing in his psychiatric practice (Winnicott 1971). Something more needed to be considered about the nature of the development of the inner world of infants: ". . . a third part of the life . . . a part we cannot ignore . . . an intermediate area of experiencing, into which the inner reality and external life of infants both contribute" (Winnicott 1971 2). Exploring this area of experience in the inner life of infants became important for us as we began to re- conceptualize our course offerings in our early childhood program.

## **A THEORY BASED ON STAGES OF DEPENDENCE ON THE MOTHER**

The realization of dependence on mothers became the focal point for Winnicott. He describes three phases of dependence that infants experience: absolute, relative and "toward independence."

### ***Phase 1 – absolute dependence***

At first, infants are not aware of their dependence on their mothers (Winnicott 1963). However, this dependency is so strong that we cannot speak about infants but only about infant/mother-dyads. "There is no such thing as an infant! . . . if you show me an infant, you certainly show me someone caring for that infant, or at least a pram with someone's eyes and ears glued to it. One sees a nursing couple" (Winnicott 1952, 99). As there is no self-other distinction, as far as young infants are concerned, there is no one that exists separate from them. Based on their memories of being mothered, mothers provide for their infants' needs empathetically appearing just to know what their infants need even though their infants cannot communicate these needs. Infants live in a magical world where the breast, a term Winnicott used for the mother, appears just as they have a desire for it. From the infants' point of view, their needs are met magically just as these needs arise. All meeting of needs is experienced as if they are under the infants' omnipotent control. The paradox never to be asked of them at this stage is: "Did you conceive of this, or was it presented from without?" (Winnicott 1971 12). The infant is allowed to think that s/he creates what s/he needs. The infant is allowed to believe that s/he is omnipotent.

Infants' experiences of omnipotent control of their environment are made possible by their mothers' absorption with them shortly before birth and her empathy through identification with them at birth. Mothers make a space in their emotional lives for devotion and commitment to their infants, which allows their infants to bond without awareness of separateness. Mothers make their infants present to their reality and try to see the world through their infants' eyes. Perfect adaptation to the infants' needs is not necessary, but the mother, the environment, must be good enough to allow the infant to experience omnipotence. Because there is no awareness of separateness, infants are aware of this relationship when touched, held, or caressed or experience other physical contacts. The developmental tasks for infants in this stage of development are integration, personalization and realization (Winnicott 1960).

## *Integration of experiences*

In this stage of development, infants' feelings, needs and tension states are experienced as discreet happenings rather than a continuous experience of self.

I think an infant cannot be aware at the start that while feeling this or that in his cot or enjoying the skin sensations of bathing, he is the same as himself screaming for immediate satisfaction, possessed by an urge to get at and destroy something unless satisfied by me. . . and I think there is not necessarily integration between a child asleep and a child awake. Aspects of the environment are felt to be the infant and aspects of the infant are felt to be the environment. Even when there is continuity in maturation and moments of "I am!" the emerging self is not felt to be the same at all times. Because experiences are discrete rather than continuous, there is no lived psychic reality" (Winnicott 1945 153).

Integration refers to the gradual merging of these separate experiences into a continuous whole as infants come to know that these experiences are related to each other. Integration, putting discrete experiences together in a continuous way, happens over time. While infants work hard at orienting themselves in space, understanding that one thing follows the other, that experiences are all connected; they must be allowed to return over and over to that earlier un-integrated space where experiences are seen as discreet happenings, as it is the precursor of adult relaxation. Infants need time to rest, to be inconsequential and to enjoy solitude. "Winnicott called this the capacity to be alone, and considered it 'one of the most important signs of maturity in emotional development" (Davis and Wallbridge 1990 35). Infants need uninterrupted time and space to go back and forth between integration and non-integration.

During this phase, it is the mothers' task to contain whatever tensions arise. Because the only anxiety infants experience in this phase is annihilation anxiety, mothers must protect their children from undue anxiety. To do this, mothers must keep infants from impingements that would thwart their continuity of existence. The maternal environment must be a "holding" environment. A holding environment is an environment that has as its main function "the reduction to a minimum the number of impingements to which the infant must react with the resultant of the annihilation of personal being" (Winnicott 1960 47). Mothers protect their infants by meeting their needs empathetically as they arise.

## *Personalization of experiences*

As infants integrate discreet experiences into a continuous stream of experiences, the second developmental task of this stage is personalization. Personalization is a process of placing their

emotional experiences, their linked sensations, needs and feelings within their bodies, establishing a rudimentary sense of self, a person. Emotionally, infants do not yet know that their inner lives lay within their bodies that separate them from the outside world. Because they cannot yet differentiate what is "me" from "not me" to know what "my experience," they cannot yet experience themselves as persons. Even when the link between their inner life and body is made, there can be periods when they lose touch with each other. Emerging physical and psychic components are gradually gathered into a unit. As infants work on integrating experiences into a personalized whole, they are supported by their mothers' ability to continually maintain environments, facilitating environments, where in addition to meeting their infants' instinctual needs, they meet their infants' psychological needs. To meet their infants' psychological needs, mothers create a facilitating environment that allows adequate time and space for their infants to use the satisfaction of having their needs "well met" to feel real as they develop according to their unique maturational process into a person.

### *Realization of experiences*

Successfully experiencing small doses of reality is the third developmental task of the phase of absolute dependence. Integrating discreet experiences into a continuous stream of experiences, and then personalizing them by making them "my experience," infants must now gradually meet reality. Their sense of being omnipotent must slowly come to an end. In the course of normal living, there comes a time when mothers cannot immediately meet their infants' needs just as they are presented. By lessening their empathetic adaptations to their infants' needs, mothers begin to frustrate their infants. With each frustration, omnipotence is pierced and infants experience a bit of reality. This maternal failure is a necessary part of the soon to be relation between the mother and infant. "If all goes well, the infant can come to gain from the experience of frustration since incomplete adaptation to need makes objects real, that is to say, hated as well as loved." (Winnicott 1971 11)

During this process of separation, the aggression of infants toward their mothers comes into play. Since mothers have as their role to protect their infants from any impingements that would heighten anxiety about being annihilated, aggression towards mothers is one of the environmental needs mothers must hold. Up to this point in their development, infants were experiencing the magical and immediate meeting of their needs by an object referred to as the

"good breast." Gradually forming in their minds is an object, the "bad breast" that is thwarting an immediate response to their needs. Infants' object instinctual needs "destroy" by attacking their mothers' bodies and their mothers must be willing to absorb and hold such aggressive attacks. Winnicott speculated that infants thought that they loved their mothers so much that their love was the cause of the destruction. This destructive drive pushes their mothers outside the sphere of omnipotence, thus objectifying them for the first time. But the "bad breast," the mother frustrating the infant, and the "good breast," the mother meeting the infant's needs, are internal to these infants. Good and bad mothers are not one unit yet and they are not separate from their infants. If mothers survive the attacks, infants can continue the process of integrating the "bad breast/ good breast" into one unit and come to know that the mother that frustrates and the mother that satisfies their needs are the same person. There is an inherent connection between the ability of mothers to survive the destructive attacks, their infants' growth out of omnipotence, and their infants' ability later to enter into a relationship with them. The ability of mothers to hold destructive attacks without retaliating is critical to their infants' ability to perceive reality, see people and objects apart from themselves and to be able to enter into relationships with them. If mothers can resist from retaliating in any way, infants can come to perceive their mothers as both the "good and bad breast," a whole and integrated unit outside of themselves. The capacity to integrate the experiences of the bad breast and good breast, the good and bad parts of a love object, into a sturdy sense of object constancy has long been considered to be one of the building blocks of psychological health (Fraiberg et al. 1975) and a hallmark of the adult capacity to love (Fairbairn 1946; Kernberg 1976; Klein 1986; Winnicott 1965). These affirming and non-affirming experiences carry messages like DNA from a "double helix" where opposites come together in a life-supporting integration (Howes and Smith 1995).

### *Phase 2 – relative dependence*

Winnicott used the term relative dependence, to speak about the time period from the beginning of the infants' awareness of the breakdown of their omnipotent control of their mothers at the end of the stage of absolute dependence to the time of their emerging awareness of and ambivalence towards their mothers as separate beings. At about 6-8 months of age, infants show a change in their behavior towards their mothers that seems to indicate an awareness of the separateness of their mothers and other objects in their surroundings. This growing capacity to distance their mothers and begin to experience dependence on them as a "not me" object becomes critical for

healthy ongoing development (Winnicott 1960, 1963). Part of this distancing process is the experience of a growing sense of fear of loss of their mother. Infants use a variety of experiences and objects to assist them with the anxiety that is caused by the fear of losing their mother. Winnicott referred to the experiences used by infants to manage the feelings of loss as transitional phenomena.

Transitional phenomena bridge the gap between the fantasized world of omnipotence in the absolute dependence phase and the acceptance of reality, the perception of the world as unity outside of the self. "The whole procedure of infant care has as its main characteristic a steady presentation of the world to the infant." (Winnicott 1963 87)

There is considerable variation of patterns displayed by infants as they develop from the use of the thumb "me" to their attachment to a special object that is "not me." Infants may become attached to a special object, a transitional object, like a blankie, teddy bear or a doll. Special objects are not part of the inside of infants, yet they are not external because they are imbued with intense, powerful meaning.

To fully realize the function of the transitional object, the object must have certain characteristics. Infants must have dominance over the object and must be allowed to choose the special comfort object. While thinking the object is completely owned by them, the object must also have a reality of its own containing both positive and negative feelings. Transitional objects hold the infants' emotions in a space between them and their mothers. The object is sometimes treated as though it were their mother. However, this object is neither real nor delusional. It is what Winnicott terms, illusory. For Winnicott, an illusory experience happens between fantasy and reality (Winnicott 1971). It is here, in the space of transitional experiencing, that infants can, for the first time, enter into a relationship with something outside of themselves. Here in transitional space, the way is paved for relationships to be manifested in play. Winnicott contended that child's play is based on giving an illusory meaning to something real. Thus he argued ". . . transitional phenomena and its later variant, play, are always creative" (Summers, 1994 149). From this point of view, creativity is the way the individual approaches the external world and "[it] is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living." (Winnicott 1971 65) By entering into a relationship with something outside of them, it can be said that infants have stepped into reality and the transitional object is



one manifestation of this phenomenon (Litt1986). Transitional objects can ease the pain of separation and loss, providing continuity of the maternal environment, a necessary space in the child's mind to foster the growth of self.

Once infants realize that there is a world outside of them, they come to realize that their needs are met from the outside as well as the inside. They then begin to realize their dependence on their mothers to satisfy their needs. As temporal integration continues to get stronger during this phase, infants carry one experience over to another and enter into a relationship with their mothers in a new way. In addition to their physical connection to their mothers, mothers can now be recognized from the connection that they have to their infants' inner lives, ego-relatedness. Between the sucking of the thumb and the use of the doll or teddy bear, the infant develops from acts that he thinks he creates and to being able to project what he has internalized about the qualities of the mother. Infants move from a state of not being aware of anything but themselves and not being aware of how indebted they are to their mothers to perceiving their mothers as necessary for their survival.

In the absolute dependence phase, mothers made a near total adaptation to the needs of their infants, by meeting their infants' needs empathically and by protecting their infants from outside interference. Now, instead of empathically meeting needs, the mothers' primary task is to allow their infants to communicate their needs to them and to respond to their infants' call. To continue to meet their infants' needs empathically for too long impinges on their infants' psychological growth. Mothers can begin to live "with their infants," adapting to their emerging sense of self. It is now up to the mothers to provide ego support to their infants by allowing them to play alone in their presence without interference. Ongoing aggressiveness on the part of the infants suggests that they are still ambivalent towards their mothers as objects outside of themselves. It is as if infants are wondering: Do I love her? Do I hate her? Who is she? Who am I? It is up to the mothers to continue to hold their infants' aggression and allow them time to be concerned about their attacks. Holding these attacks will help the infant to feel guilt and later atonement. The experience of injuring a loved one and then make amends for their acts helps infants to feel agency.

### ***Phase 3 – towards independence***

Once infants have placed their mothers outside of themselves, they come to realize that mothers

have relationships with other people. Critical to this phase of development is the infants' growing realization that their mothers and fathers have a relationship with each other that is separate from their relationship with them. As in the classical Freudian theory, young children must resolve their ambivalence towards the parents' relationship, the classical oedipal phase, and learn to fit into the family. Infants now struggle to learn to become part of a network of relationships. In this article, the father's role and the oedipal stage has not been elaborated as I am focusing on the early maternal environment and its implications for quality early care. However, the fathers' role as a support to the mother/infant dyad, their discrete relationship with their infants, and the tone of their relationship with the infants' mother is of vital importance to the psychological development of their infants. Mothers hold their feelings about the infants' fathers in their minds. In turn, infants have been internalizing the feelings derived from these relationships in service of the creation of self. In this phase of development, infants must, in some way, resolve their ambivalence towards the parents' relationship. Infants are learning to become part of a network of relationships that will be strengthened and expanded as they move out of the home and enter the early care setting.

### **WINNICOTT'S THEORY MOVES FROM HOME TO SCHOOL**

#### ***A nesting of psychological environments***

There is nothing new in our thinking that a quality early care environment replicates the home environment. Too often, it is thought that the connection between the home and the early care environment is limited to the physical setting, language, and communication style of the home. These home elements are very important. What Winnicott adds to this thinking is that the early care environment should be a reflection of the mothers,' the caregivers', and the infants' psychological environments nesting one within the other. Knowing what has been going on in the mother/infant relationship becomes extremely important if the infant teacher is to be able to relate to the infant as a unique young human

A quality infant care environment is created by the way the teacher relates to the infant. For the very young infant, the teacher must respond to the infant empathetically. The ability to respond to infants empathetically rests upon the caregivers' memory of care. When adults become infant teachers, they enter into space where they relive their own infant experiences of being cared for. The memories of the feelings, those positive and negative memories of being cared for, can consciously or unconsciously assist or hinder the teacher's relationships with the

children in their care. If all was reasonably positive during their own early care experiences, they are able to care reasonably well for these children. If not, memories of negative early relationships can vie with memories of positive early relationships in their lives and can become a challenge that will have to be dealt with in an honest and open way with the help of an experienced mentor. I would venture to say that every new professional teacher needs a more mature professional teacher to "hold" him/her in their mind. Being the recipient of another's devotion can help teachers be devoted to their infants.

Winnicott also adds the idea that in a quality care environment, the teacher provides a facilitating environment that supports each infant's unique maturational process. Infant teaching is a body to body, face to face, raw relationship with very young human beings and their mothers. Touching infants lovingly, smiling as communication, rocking for soothing are not new to infant care, but allowing the infant to set the pace and style of these interactions with the teacher are the hallmarks of a devoted relationship. Quality infant care takes place when adults do things "with" and not "to" infants (Recchia and Shin 2010). How teachers do things with infants is as important as what they do. Not only *what* teachers do with infants, but how teachers do things with or for infants is crucial here. *How* teachers feed infants, *how* teachers change infants, *how* teachers talk with infants, *how* teachers talk with each other and to other infants, become models for the self that is emerging in the infants' inner lives. Teachers need to be very conscious about *how*, for example, their joys and fears may become incorporated into infants' growing sense of what to be joyful about and what is to be feared. Expressing an interest in the infants' experiences of playing or periods of simply "being" sends the message to infants that what they do and who they are is important. It is day-to-day early interactions that affect children's behavior and help shape the way children learn to relate to people and learn about the world through these important relationships (Bornstein and Bornstein 1995).

As infants mature, teachers must be mindful that they align their responses to the infants' needs as the infants make them known. Infants must be allowed to present a need and have it well met for them to realize that there is a reality outside themselves. Infants can and must be given the right to initiate, experience, and control their being in the world. In the midst of providing custodial care infants, time must be made to attend to the infant's psychological needs as well. Schedules would reflect that infants are allowed to eat when hungry, sleep when they are tired, and engage in being alone or playing with others or objects as dictated by their inner clock,

not the clock on the wall. We must keep in mind that the infants in our care are on a continuum of development through Winnicott's phases of dependence. Young infants are in a transitional space that starts at birth and continues through the realization that they are moving towards independence when they will realize themselves as persons separate yet connected to people in their extended environments. What they once experienced as omnipotence must now develop into a sense of agency. Doing too much for too long actually can cause infants to be too dependent at a time when they are moving into reality and trying to understand that there is someone outside of themselves that is meeting their needs. Caregivers must see the world as infants see it and respond in a way that the infants need them to respond. Keeping in mind the stages of dependence that infants are inwardly experiencing, the environment must be a holding environment where infants can engage in the work of "coming to be" with as few impingements as reasonably possible.

### *The preschool environment*

The main implication for the teachers of preschool children rests in understanding that the psychological development of the infants' earliest days can be used as a basis for understanding ongoing psychological development in the preschool years. Preschool children are on a continuum moving back and forth between these phases as they transition into school. Preschool children wrap up former stages of development to be who they are now. In every four-year old there is an infant and toddler who is well or not so-so-well established. Preschool children may have to revisit their infant selves now and again for comfort, purposes of integration of self, and feelings of being real in the world. Preschool children are still trying to separate fantasy from reality, the meaning of their parents' relationship, and the excitement that all of this is causing in his inner life. "The consequences of these developments is that ideas of love are followed by ideas of hate, by jealousy and painful emotional conflict, and by personal suffering" (Winnicott 1964 191). The expression of these strong feelings can be direct and, at times, be displayed in aggressive behaviors. If teachers have a grounding in Winnicott, they can better understand the root of these behaviors. The preschool curriculum can support the expression of strong emotions as it offers a way for children to express their ambivalence towards parents, their growing sense of agency and power, love, hate, jealousy, etc. through play, art, storytelling, songs, and relationship building with other children. It would be beneficial for teachers of preschool children to know about the continuum of psychological development so they can visit this space

with young children and allow them to move back and forth on the continuum of development. If their early care has been positive and the parents continue to support the psychological development of their children, preschool teachers can move on to presenting meaningful experiences that expand the children's understanding of the world around them and their place in it.

### CONCLUSION

We agreed that Winnicott matters. Winnicott matters because he offers a framework for thinking about the psychological development of young children. Starting in the earliest days of infants' lives and developing throughout the preschool years, understanding Winnicott's theory can help pre-service teachers to understand the behaviors of young children better and create appropriate environments for the mastery of content knowledge and skills that support their ongoing psychological development. When the environment is psychologically developmentally appropriate, PsyDAP, aligned with the dependence stages outlined by Winnicott, it opens a space for children to slowly come to know who they are as a self and whom they are becoming by exploring the world around them and entering into relationships with objects and people in their world. Children need and want time to explore the world around them. At the same time, they also need and want time to rest, to be inconsequential and to enjoy solitude. Time and space to simply "be" is essential. Winnicott reinforces our contention that play is an essential part of life for young children. It is in play that children can be most creative and it is creative apperception that makes children feel real.

Winnicott matters because he offers teachers an understanding of a healthy relationship between mothers and their young children. Knowing the mothers' role in this time of early development, including their role during times of their child's aggressive acts against their mothers, can help teachers provide a facilitating environment for mothers as well as their children. Early childhood teachers must be ready not only to bring their theoretical knowledge and objectivity to the relationship, but most importantly, they must possess a willingness to learn from the children and their mothers. The mother/infant dyad is nested now in a third-party relationship with the teacher. Literally, the teacher must wrap her arms around the mother/ child/ dyad, creating a nesting of caring environments.

Winnicott matters for both preschool and infant pre-service teachers because he reminds

them that some of the knowledge about their teaching comes from the inner core of beliefs and values about young children. So, in addition to helping the pre-service teacher candidate understand the inner life of young children and the role played by mothers, teacher education programs must be sensitive to the dispositions of the pre-service teachers. Opportunities need to be provided for them to reflect upon their own early experiences of care and the effect these experiences are having on their ability to provide "good enough" experiences for the children in their care. We decided that Winnicott's theory of the psychological development of young children could help us to re conceptualize our course work for pre-service early childhood teachers.

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