

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

PREKINDERGARTEN

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

The social and emotional curriculum builds upon children's intrapersonal and interpersonal skills by focusing on themes of individual choice, emotions, self-awareness, and awareness of group needs. Many children come to school with some understanding of self, home, and family. As they learn how to become members of a group children begin to understand how they are alike and different from their peers. Children work through separation and connection as they become comfortable leaving their parents and moving into their classroom community. In both large and small groups, children learn to express their feelings verbally as they attempt to resolve conflicts that may arise.

While using the family as a springboard for discussions, many children will begin to broaden their understanding of classmates to further their interpretation and acceptance of society. Children begin to learn about individual rights and responsibility as they help create classroom guidelines. Open discussions around acceptance lay the foundation for children's self-respect and respect for others. Much emphasis is placed upon the importance of individual choice, and teachers may read stories and biographies that depict decision-making and the subsequent results. Children are always encouraged to think through various possibilities and potential consequences before acting. Furthermore, they begin to realize that the choices they make often affect others, as well as themselves.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

Intrapersonal

- Internalize and comply with simple classroom routines and rules
- Take risks in trying new things
- Accept redirection
- Choose activities without assistance
- Remain with an activity until it is completed
- Display perseverance and pride in accomplishments
- Transition smoothly from one activity to the next

Interpersonal

- Respect classmates and classroom materials
- Take turns
- Display a caring attitude toward peers
- Show a balance of initiating and accepting ideas for play
- Attempt to resolve conflicts verbally and in a developmentally appropriate manner
- Demonstrate an awareness of group needs
- Play cooperatively and share

Learning Looks Like This:

A teacher reads the story, This Is Our House, by Michael Rosen. As the children listen, the story describes how one child won't let anyone into a cardboard box that he pretends is his own house. As he continues to exclude people for different reasons, the children in the class show frustrated faces and begin to offer comments and questions. "Why does the little boy not want anyone to come in?" "Everyone has different hair, he's not being very nice." "It's not okay to tell people that they can't come in unless they are a stranger and then you ask your parents" "There are a lot of nice things to say, you just have to be nice to your friends."

As the children continue to discuss equity and fairness among friends, they share how they feel when they are excluded. The teacher asks them to make a face showing when they are upset or frustrated. They are asked to turn to a friend and say one nice thing about each other. After a few smiles and laughs circle the room, the teacher asks the children to help create guidelines that include everyone. The guidelines are then marked with each child's name and displayed near the meeting area.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Communication and self-expression are the primary functions of language. The goal of the Prekindergarten language arts curriculum is to build upon existing skills to create a community of active and interested communicators. Language skills involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Using these skills children enhance interpersonal relationships in the classroom. Teachers encourage children to practice expressive language skills like learning how to rhyme, singing songs, and reciting poems. Role-play and dramatizations of favorite books provide students with opportunities for successful communication and "book language."

Exposure to all aspects of language through print-rich environments and child centered, multi-sensory activities lay the foundation for future literacy readiness. Books are always available in the classroom library and teachers often read stories at the children's requests. Pre-writing opportunities are abundant as children engage in painting, drawing, digging, and sculpting. These activities strengthen the hand musculature that they will need for later writing tasks. Children interact with the alphabet through activities like matching, Bingo, letter scavenger hunts, puzzles, and magnetic letters. An explanation of children's work, transcribed by teachers, helps students to recognize the symbolic nature of print. Children often transition to making their own "words" by a scribble, stream of letters, or even inventive spelling. Children also practice stroke development and letter formation through drawing and tracing activities. Through literacy experiences children gain phonological processing skills, language skills, and pre-writing skills that will lead them to the writing and early reading they will practice in Kindergarten.

LANGUAGE ARTS OBJECTIVES:**Pre-Reading**

- Identify uppercase letters
- Identify own name
- Begin to identify lowercase letters
- Manipulate sounds in language
- Begin to decode letter sounds
- Understand the connection between print and the spoken word
- Demonstrate concepts of print, such as left-to-right progression

- Begin to understand the structure of sentences
- Explore a variety of literature including fiction, poetry, biography
- Compare and contrast books by the same author or illustrator
- Make simple predictions in stories

Pre-writing

- Make representational drawings
- Use a developmentally appropriate grasp
- Establish 'handedness'
- Work toward writing letters and numbers with correct formation
- Write first name and/or other familiar words

Language Skills

- Retell stories
- Repeat songs and poems
- Articulate clearly
- Participate in small and large group discussions
- Ask relevant questions and make relevant comments
- Express thoughts clearly and accurately
- Use rhyming words
- Recognize and use descriptive words
- Use developmentally appropriate grammar
- Identify rhyming words
- Comprehend new information
- Begin to ask meaning of unfamiliar words
- Follow 2-3 step directions

Learning Looks Like This:

On a snowy February day the children gather at meeting time. The teacher places a poster on the easel. It has large print and an illustration of a bare tree. The teacher tells the children that they will be learning a new poem and asks if anyone can use the words and illustrations to guess what the story is going to be about. Immediately hands are raised, and the teacher calls upon several children for their ideas. One child says, "I think it's going to be about a dead tree because the tree has no leaves." Another child offers, "One of the words begins with a 'W.' I know that because my name has a 'W' in it." The teacher continues to point out the interesting connections they are making.

She then reads, "Tree in Winter," carefully pointing to the words on the poster. A few children attend to her movement along the print while others remain focused on her voice. After hearing the poem once, the children are encouraged to recite the poem together. One child even volunteers to point to the words for his classmates. As the week continues the children have learned the poem, and they take a walk to observe the trees outside in winter, remembering the words to their poem as they walk.

MATHEMATICS

The foundation for the mathematics curriculum at the Prekindergarten level is based on the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards. This curriculum provides children with opportunities to explore, manipulate, and experiment with objects and materials. Mathematical content knowledge is centered on number sense and operations, patterns, geometry, measurement, logic, and collection of data. Children are encouraged to explore with manipulatives such as Cuisenaire rods, pattern blocks, Geo-boards, unit blocks, and scales. Through such explorations children develop spatial awareness, enhance logical thinking, and learn how to solve problems as they relate to everyday life. Children also learn that their peers may have similar or different ways to solve mathematical problems. Additional materials and lessons enhance Prekindergarten students' understanding of mathematical concepts.

MATHEMATICS OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize and label basic shapes
- Sort and classify by size and shape
- Recognize and create simple patterns
- Identify and rote count 1 to 20
- Count using one to one correspondence
- Make connections between numerals and amount
- Make simple spatial connections (puzzles)
- Explore with mathematical manipulatives
- Begin to understand sequential order
- Utilize the concept of number in everyday problem solving
- Utilize simple algorithms with logical groupings
- Utilize estimating and measuring skills
- Compare characteristics of one object to another
- Collect data and create and analyze graphs
- Understand ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.)
- Use a variety of problem solving strategies

Learning Looks Like This:

A child walks over to the beanstalks that her class has been growing. She opens her folder at the table, has a seat, and quickly flips to the bar graph that she has been working on during the week. Examining the beanstalks, she tells a friend, "I think they will be taller today." As she looks at her graph she notices that the beans were five unifix cubes tall the last time she measured. She finds the unifix cubes on the shelf and snaps five of them together. Holding the cubes next to one beanstalk she exclaims, "I was right, they are taller today!"

A teacher takes a seat next to the children and says, "Let's predict how many more cubes you will have to add today." One of the children states, "Just add one." The other says, "How about three?" The teacher suggests, "Let's add one cube at a time until the column of cubes is the same height as the bean stalks." After adding two cubes to the column, the children agree that the cubes are now as tall as the bean stalks. "If the bean stalks were five cubes tall last time and we added on two cubes today, how tall are they now?" One child reaches for her graph to color in five cubes and then adds two more in another color. After counting the cubes together the children proclaim, "Seven, the bean stalks are seven cubes tall!"

SCIENCE

Science is a natural process where children's curiosity leads them to explore, question, predict, and document their world. Through the processes of prediction, trial and error, and observation, children build the foundation for more complex learning in all areas of science. Specifically, classrooms are exposed to physical science, life science, earth science, and engineering.

Science is an active process of inquiry in which children make sense of their observations and explore answers to their hypotheses. Prekindergarten teachers present science in structured and unstructured activities to facilitate active and appropriate exploration for all children. In this way, the unknown is quickly changed to known and accessible information.

Teachers integrate science across the curriculum. For example, a connection occurs as experimentation leads to drawing pictures of the steps that occurred and then writing a class journal. The children may write a poem or sing a song about their investigations. Classrooms may visit the library to check out a book on a relevant topic, or they may play a game in the gym which challenges their understanding of what they have learned about colors, numbers, shapes, or movement. Science is also approached globally as children study other environments as well as scientists from around the world.

SCIENCE OBJECTIVES:

Physical Sciences

- Observe, describe and compare properties of various materials
- Experiment with motion and force
- Experiment with liquids and solids
- Experiment with a variety of objects to determine point of balance

Life Sciences

- Observe and measure the growth and movement of living things
- Compare and contrast living and non-living things
- Notice similarities and differences between plants and animals
- Explore the life cycles of plants and animals
- Observe plants and animals in their environments and understand their needs
- Explore various habitats

Earth Sciences

- Recognize seasonal names and their characteristics
- Compare and contrast materials that make up land
- Investigate local weather patterns
- Explore how the sun's energy affects living and non-living things
- Explore the function and characteristics of air
- Observe scientific phenomena with repeating patterns (day and night)

Learning Looks Like This:

Two children enter the classroom and notice a few classmates gathered around a teacher reading a book about woodland animals. As they join the group, the teacher points out a page filled with pictures of animals and the tracks their paws leave behind in the mud. One by one, children match the animals with corresponding tracks on the page. The teacher asks, “Can you describe the size and shape of each animal print?” As the group begins asking more questions about the animals, the teacher moves the children to a few tables, providing them with clay, cardboard cutouts, and appropriate tools for making the woodland animal tracks.

Molding the clay, the children comment on the differences and similarities of the animal tracks. One child says, “Look how small my hand is compared to the bear claw.” Another exclaims, “I have more fingers than some of the animals.” The children then begin to discuss the uses of front legs and hind legs in comparison to human hands and feet. One more child describes, “Rabbits need strong back feet to jump higher.” The teacher provides a bit more clay and asks each of the children to make their own handprints. As the clay pieces dry, the class has created a list of similarities and differences of their own handprints to the tracks of the woodland animals.

ANTI-BIAS

Children are aware of and affected by human differences from an early age, and our community is based on respecting and appreciating the similarities and differences found within our school, neighborhoods, and throughout the world. This strong emphasis on anti-bias education promotes a sense of belonging for all students and builds a sense of connection between people.

The goal of the anti-bias curriculum is to challenge the impact of bias on the students’ social and intellectual development by helping them acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to live respectfully in a diverse community.

While keeping the children’s developmental level in mind, the anti-bias curriculum introduces children to challenging vocabulary, reflective topics, and brings abstract ideas into real practice. The curriculum builds upon itself, encouraging the students to move along a continuum from knowledge to understanding to tolerance to acceptance to respect and inclusion. Throughout all of their learning, the students are encouraged to develop and actively participate in lessons to end the cycle of bias. The anti-bias curriculum focuses on, but is not limited to, eight major areas of bias. These include racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, religious intolerance, and size discrimination. Through direct, pro-active instruction, as well as using everyday events within the classroom and the larger world, the curriculum is integrated into all aspects of the students’ school experience. Monthly events, such as all-school assemblies are often springboards for further learning experiences.

Above all, we are working to instill in the students a respect for themselves, their classmates, and their community, while providing each child with strategies for actively improving the social conditions of all of those around them.

ANTI-BIAS OBJECTIVES:

- Help children develop a sense of self-identity
- Participate in a caring community where sharing is highly valued
- Establish a feeling of openness, comfort, and safety in the classroom

- Help children feel comfortable with people from diverse backgrounds
- Be able to label and identify actions as fair and unfair
- Gain an understanding of the many differences in the world through literature, puzzles, pictures, and other daily classroom materials
- Discuss inclusion/exclusion based on race, gender, class, age, ability, and family structure
- Discuss gender identity while exploring and challenging traditional gender roles
- Identify differences and similarities of skin tone and describe own skin color
- Learn about scientific basis for skin color
- Explore differences between concepts of want and need
- Recognize and identify different ages (infant, child, etc.)
- Recognize differences and similarities of age related abilities
- Recognize own personal abilities and limitations
- Recognize similarities and differences with regard to people's abilities
- Recognize that there are a variety of family structures
- Recognize that there are families that are similar to and/or different from one's own, but the common factor is that they all love each other

Learning Looks Like This:

The children have been reading stories with their teachers about people with different abilities. They notice that nobody in the classroom has a wheelchair. One of the teachers asks the children to describe how a child would go through the school using a wheelchair. "How would you swing, go upstairs, get to the playground, and how would you move around the classroom?" The teacher showed the students a photo of a friend who uses a wheelchair and plays sports. The children remark, "Wow, look at how he is in the race!" "His hands must be strong!" "Is it hard to keep sitting for that long?" "We could have him teach us how to go so fast." "Can we show him what sports we know?" "Can he come to our school to visit?"

On the way to the playground, the teacher points out the sign for the elevator in the school and demonstrates how someone in a wheelchair may get upstairs to the hallway and then into the classroom. The children begin to describe a special walkway that would let a person in a wheelchair move to every part of the playground. When they return to the classroom they make a book about their ideas, Our Newest Friend, and the teacher suggests having her friend who uses a wheelchair visit the classroom soon.