

Planning a Developmentally Appropriate Program for Children

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*I never teach my pupils;
I only attempt to provide the
conditions in which they can learn.
--Albert Einstein*

Table of Contents

Are You Ready?	4
Start Here!	5
Know the Children	7
Age Level Characteristics	8
Supporting Self-regulation and Social Competence	26
Building Relationships	27
Practice the 5 Ls Daily	28
Building Relationships with Children	29
Building Relationships with Families	31
How to Support Children’s Learning	32
Creating the Environment	33
Safety First	34
Here’s to Good Health	35
A Developmentally Appropriate Schedule	37
Transitions	44
Addressing Inappropriate Behavior	45
Planning Materials for Play and Learning	46
Interest Centers	47
The Outdoor Learning Environment	56
Planning the Curriculum	57
The Importance of Play	58
The Adult’s Role in Children’s Play	59
A Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum	60
They’re Not Just Playing—They’re Learning!	62
Resources	65
Children’s Books	66
Books for Teachers	68
Fingerplays and Songs	69
Internet Resources	72

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Inspiration and Foundation

This book builds on the original 1986 “blue book” on quality, which remains a favorite resource for teachers. Throughout this second edition, you will find “Blue Book Classic” pages from the original work.

Planning a Quality Program for Children

Written by Ruth Steinsiek and Darlene Francis

Illustrated by Allison Anne Fletcher

Arkansas State University Childhood Services. 1986

Start Here!

Every child deserves our best, and we want the best for every child. There are many factors that affect the quality of the child's experiences in your program. We will focus on the pieces of quality listed below.

We use the word *teacher* throughout this book to mean any adult who regularly works with the children. In your program these people may be called by titles such as teacher, lead teacher, assistant teacher, teacher aide, or paraprofessional. When you read *teacher* in this book, it means the people who provide care and learning experiences for the children.

Know the Children

We want to provide the best care and learning opportunities for children. To achieve that goal, we must have some knowledge of how children grow and learn. In this book we will find out about typical behaviors for children of different ages. You will also find ideas for learning materials and activities that are best for each age.

We also need to know each individual in our group. Children follow a predictable sequence of development, but each one is different. You may discover that the joy of teaching is in learning to understand and appreciate each child.

Build Relationships

We know that the relationships we have with our children and their families are as important as the materials and activities we provide. Children thrive in an environment that is warm and supportive. This book considers the teacher's role in building strong relationships with children and families.

Create the Learning Environment

Children deserve a safe, healthy, inviting environment. In this book we will consider how the teacher can create a wonderful learning environment. You will find information about health and safety. Sample daily schedules will help you plan time for meaningful play and learning. We also provide ideas on how to choose the best toys and learning materials.

Plan the Curriculum

A good curriculum is planned to meet the needs of the children in the group. We will focus on how to plan your curriculum, how children learn, and how to assess children's progress.

Are You Ready?

Said the creepy, crawly caterpillar,
I don't like change.

Said the creepy, crawly caterpillar,
I don't want to change.

I like this creepy, crawly feeling,
I will never, never change.

Then one day...
That creepy, crawly caterpillar did make a change...
A beautiful butterfly he became,

Flying high into the sky, he sighed,
I am glad I made a change.

Ruth Steinsiek

REMEMBER THE BUTTERFLY



Change is difficult for most of us. We often do not see ourselves as others see us. We have been operating in the same way for years, so why change? Maybe you don't need a drastic change, but why don't you assess your program and see what could be done more effectively? Does the outside of the building need a "face lift"? Does the outdoor play area reflect the wonderful program you have? How does your facility compare with other programs in your area?

When parents are searching for child care, what will they see in your program?

Are you willing to try new ideas that will pay big dividends for your program and your children?

Know the Children



The Fascinating First Year



This is an amazing year of growth and development! Over the course of this first year, the child's weight will approximately triple and she will grow about ten inches. She will learn to lift her head and chest, roll over, sit up, creep, crawl, and finally stand, and will explore the world around her with her hands, feet, and mouth. Grasping skills develop as she discovers her toes and learns to reach for objects and people. During this first year, she will grow from being fed, to eating soft foods and holding a bottle independently, before developing the ability to successfully finger feed solid foods!

She recognizes the sound of the human voice from birth, and soon learns to distinguish parents, family members, and other familiar adults. As her hearing and vision improve, she may become apprehensive of unfamiliar people. With patience and time, she can grow to trust and bond with new caregivers. During this year she learns to return a smile and communicate with the people in her world.

The infant's first communication is a means of expressing the most basic of needs, including hunger and discomfort. As the year progresses, she is able to express more complex needs and ideas. Verbal communication progresses from cooing and gurgling, to back and forth "baby talk" exchanges, to the emergence of first words. Non-verbal communication may include waving, blowing kisses, and even sign language. She understands many words long before she can speak, and her receptive language will outweigh her expressive language for years to come. In addition, even very young babies are responsive to tone, facial expressions, and body language.

Cognitive growth occurs at a rapid rate during this year. The youngest infants respond to light and sound, and learn to visually track a moving object. As the year progresses, baby learns to look for an object that falls out of sight, and will try to move to reach a desired toy. She may drop objects on purpose, and she may enjoy "peek-a-boo" games. She is constantly observing and exploring her world, and learns best when there is plenty to see and do. Towards the end of this year, the child engages in a tremendous variety of activities, including banging objects together, dancing, scribbling, and looking at books.



Responding to children from birth to one year

- The youngest infants thrive on being held as much as possible. Close human contact during these first months is irreplaceable.
- Hold and carry young infants in a manner that allows them to see the world around them.
- Share positive, physical touch by rocking, hugging, holding, and patting baby's back, as well as through physical games, such as bouncing and clapping.
- Provide the smallest group size possible, with as many caring adults as possible. There is no such thing as too many loving laps!
- Provide consistent caregivers to allow the child to feel secure and form trusting relationships with adults.
- Protect the youngest infants from the more active play of older infants and toddlers.
- Provide plenty of room to crawl and explore. Avoid leaving babies in swings, seats, or Exersaucers.
- Sing, talk, and smile with babies throughout the day. Talk to her about what she is seeing, feeling, and doing; even if she can't talk yet, your words will stimulate language development.
- Respond to the infants attempts to communicate. Imitate her sounds, and engage in talkative/babbling play.
- Provide a wide variety of materials that allow baby to safely experience variety of texture, transparency, weight, color, and sound. For example, provide rattles made of wood and plastic, rattles of various colors and sizes, and rattles that clatter, jingle, and chime.
- Strive to create a baby-safe environment. Everything in the space should be safe for little hands and mouths, and furnishings should be sturdy enough to allow baby to pull up and stand without injury.
- Provide outdoor experiences. Even very young infants can enjoy stretching out on a blanket on a beautiful day!
- Remember that every child develops differently, in her own time.

Wondrous Age One

By the time of the first birthday, a strong and meaningful **bond has developed between the child and trusted adults**, especially parents. Tears are not uncommon when a favorite adult is out of sight! New caregivers take some time to get used to; the child may be shy or anxious at first.



A keen observer of the world around her, the one-year-old begins **imitating adults and older children** when playing. Telephones, pots and pans, and other props become popular for play. She is also busily **building self-help skills**. While she is still very dependent on adults, she'll appreciate the time and freedom to try new skills on her own, such as brushing her hair, finger-feeding, and drinking from a cup.

The child is curious about almost everything, and often experiments with **cause and effect**. Peek-a-boo is a favorite game, and making faces in the mirror can be a delightful pastime. She may engage in repetitive behaviors, such as dropping a spoon from the high chair tray over and over, banging two blocks together to make a noise, or filling and dumping containers of toys. These repetitive actions, and tests of caregiver responses, are a natural part of learning.



One-year-old children have mastered **the art of moving** around the room, though they do so in a wide variety of ways. Some scoot on their bellies, some crawl, and some begin to walk. Most children can pull themselves up to stand while holding on to solid objects. The one-year-old has no concept of physical boundaries, and may crawl into shelves and under chairs, or attempt to climb. As motor skills and coordination develop, he will begin to stack a few blocks, scribble with a crayon, roll a ball, clap hands, and pick up smaller objects using a pincer grasp.

The **foundations for language** are falling into place. During this year, children become more and more attentive to adult speech. Sounds are used to gain attention and express meaning, and first words are spoken. Soon, exclamations such as “uh-oh!” and favorite animal sounds follow! Books of favorite objects are popular, especially when shared with an adult who points to and names each object. The child also becomes adept at communicating with gestures, such as pointing, waving “bye-bye”, and shaking her head to say “no”. The introduction of simple sign language can create additional opportunities for successful communication by the one-year-old child.

Responding to one-year-olds

- Provide duplicates of favorite items, such as balls and toy telephones.
- Offer a variety of objects and materials to explore. Look for items that safely allow children to experience different textures (hard, soft, silky, rough, fluffy); materials (wood, metal, cloth); sizes; and weights.
- Include many open-ended materials, and allow inventive play. A block may become a telephone, or a bucket may become a drum! Seek the child's point of view: what is she seeing, doing, and learning as she plays?
- Organize toys and materials to facilitate successful play. A toy box full of random pieces does not encourage meaningful play!
- Share singing, clapping, chanting, and dancing with children.
- Provide a variety of non-breakable mirrors. Consider mirrors at various heights on the wall, on the backs of shelves, and even on the floor.
- Encourage simple cause-and-effect experiments by providing containers to fill and dump, tubes to roll balls through, and scarves for playing "peek-a-boo" with favorite toys!
- Allow plenty of time for meals and routines. Rather than rushing, provide time for children to dabble and play in the water while washing hands, explore foods and feed themselves at meals, and attempt self-help skills, such as putting on socks and shoes.
- Diapering times and other 1-on-1 routines can be more than just a chore! Use this time to talk and sing with children.
- Describe what the child is seeing, hearing, feeling, and doing. Acknowledge the child when she does something all be herself or discovers something new!
- Acknowledge the child's attempts to communicate, and provide new words for things that the child is interested in.



Children: Two Year Olds

The two-year-old is slowly but surely developing an **awareness of other children**. Although he remains primarily “me”-centered, he has learned names of classmates, and may even recognize other children’s parents and siblings. He may begin to show more enthusiasm for playing around other children as he observes their play carefully before duplicating their actions and sounds himself. Complex skills such as negotiating and turn-taking have not developed yet, so **scuffles over toys and space are common**.

Pretend play brightens the day. Dolls emerge as favorite toys, as do trucks and toy animals. **Short, simple games** are enjoyed over and over again, and the two-year-old child enjoys dabbling with paint; scribbling with crayons, chalk and markers; and kneading play dough. **Art activities** are process-oriented; children enjoy the colors, textures, and effects of the materials with little or no thought of creating a final product. **Fine motor skills and problem solving skills** are growing daily, and the child may focus on tasks such as screwing and unscrewing jar lids, scooping and pouring sand or water, stringing large beads, and stacking small blocks. Sorting by shapes, colors, and other attributes often emerges during this year.



By age two, children have generally mastered walking. This is **perhaps the most active age of all**, and children enjoy running, climbing, simple ball play, digging, hopping, and tumbling. Rocking toys and ride-on toys without pedals are popular, as are large toys that can be pushed and pulled. Small tricycles with pedals frustrate many young two-year-olds, but the skill is often mastered as the year progresses.



This is an **age of independence!** The two-year-old may refuse help and insist on trying things alone; “no” is often a favorite word. He may be self-reliant to the point of defiance at times, but he thrives when he can return to the loving arms of a nurturing adult when he is tired, frustrated, or simply in need of reassurance.

Language skills grow by leaps and bounds during this year. The child’s vocabulary increases from around 50 words to hundreds of words, and simple phrases and sentences are often used. Pronouns appear in speech during this year. Receptive language skills are growing, too. The two-year-old understands and follows simple instructions, and comprehends the meaning of many more words than he uses.

Responding to two-year-olds

- Provide safe, acceptable outlets for active play, indoors and out. Look for ways to allow children to safely challenge themselves as they build gross motor skills.
- Offer plenty of duplicates of popular toys, and offer children protected places to play with favorite toys. Teacher/parent strategies such as careful supervision and redirection allow children to feel that they can play safely near other children.
- Build on children's awareness of children and adults by creating a photo book of familiar faces.
- Provide props to encourage more complex dramatic play. Consider blankets and bottles for dolls, food bowls and brushes for stuffed animals, and toy animals and vehicles to enhance block play. Allow children to take the lead as you join in their pretend play.



- Provide materials that encourage fine motor skills and sorting/matching skills. Consider offering “real-life” materials, such as a basket of various socks to match and fold or a set of appealing containers with lids to open and close. Seek materials that allow children to experience variety, including size, shape, texture, weight, transparency and composition.
- Allow carefully-supervised exploration with sand, water, and non-toxic art materials.
- Facilitate children's budding awareness of the natural world with non-toxic classroom plants, an aquarium, and/or a window bird feeder.
- Encourage children's language acquisition by providing new words throughout the day!

Children: Three Year Olds

Three is a **social age!** The three-year-old becomes more and more involved in play with other children. She is often openly affectionate to children and adults alike, and may delight in acts of kindness, such as picking flowers for the teacher or drawing a picture for a special friend. She still has trouble understanding the point of view of others, though, so conflicts related to turn-taking and leadership roles are common. The three-year-old also struggles to understand the difference between accidental and “on-purpose” events; her feelings may be deeply hurt if a classmate hurts her unintentionally. It is not uncommon to hear a three-year-old yell at a stray toy for “making her” trip!

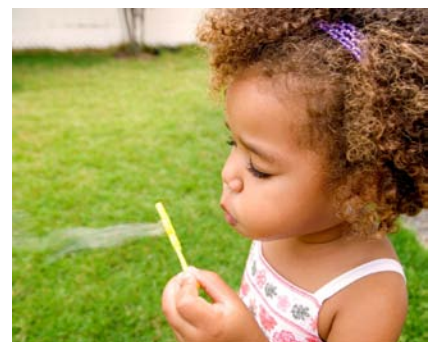
Three-year-olds **thrive on routine**, and may become flustered if things don’t happen in the usual way. They experience a wide spectrum of intense emotions, and can swing from one emotion to another quickly. She lives very much “in the now” – the wants, needs, and events of the moment govern her actions, and she may not be able to focus on benefits and consequences down the road.



Strong attachments to favorite toys have developed, and the three-year-old is often an “expert” on a favorite topic, such as trains, dinosaurs, or princesses. **Pretend play** continues to be a favorite pastime. Popular themes include mothers/fathers and babies and “puppies and kitties”. The three-year-old thrives on **repetition**, often repeating the same pretend games day after day, asking to hear a favorite book over and over again, and drawing stacks of similar pictures. Puzzles, matching games, and peg boards are often popular. She beams with pride after mastering a challenging task!

Physical strength and coordination continue to grow. The three-year-old can be a **risk taker** whose confidence exceeds her competence. **Close supervision** is critical for ensuring safe active play. Throwing and kicking balls, pedaling tricycles, climbing and sliding are favorite playground pastimes. Small motor skills are growing, too. When using crayons, scribbles often give way to very deliberate marks, such as lines and circles. Soon, self-portraits and other drawings emerge.

The three-year-old is **eager to talk** about a wide range of topics and is often **full of questions**. Five and six word sentences are common during the middle and end of this year, and she continues to master the basic rules of grammar. Favorite books include repetitive text, and the child joins in with gusto during favorite parts. She often enjoys paging through familiar books, retelling the story aloud. She also **tells her own, unique stories**, beginning with very simple single sentence stories and progressing to longer, more complicated tales – “and then... and then... and then...”!



Responding to three-year-olds

- Provide support as children begin working and playing with one another. They will continue to need your guidance throughout this year, and can learn much as you role model social behavior.
- Validate the feelings of the emotional three, and remember that events that seem small to you may be monumental to her! Celebrate her accomplishments, and help her seek solutions to problems.
- Offer a wide variety of materials to encourage sorting and classifying. The three-year-old enjoys exploring natural materials, such as seashells and stones.
- Create a library of favorite books, and share them often with individuals or small groups of children. Seek books with a repetitive story line, and encourage the child to join in telling the story.
- Play-dough and clay are popular with three-year-olds, as are finger paint and tempera paint. Encourage open-ended, process-oriented use of these materials.
- Offer an array of fine motor materials, such as puzzles, lacing and linking activities, and simple building toys. Sort and organize materials to help children be successful, and consider rotating materials to maintain interest.
- Create warm, cheerful rituals for daily tasks such as putting away toys, washing hands, and preparing for nap. Songs and games help smooth transitions while accommodating the three-year-old's desire for familiar routines.
- Take time to listen to the three-year-old's stories, and to talk with her about her favorite topics. Encourage sequencing and recollection skills as you discuss events from the recent past, such as a cooking project from earlier in the day.
- Children are developing stronger interests, and are often interested in the same topic for hours, days, or even weeks. Consider allowing children's questions, ideas, and topics of play to guide classroom planning. For example, children who race to the playground fence in eager anticipation of the weekly arrival of the trash truck may delight in sharing books about big vehicles, playing with toy trucks during block play, and having a chance to see community helper vehicles "up close and personal" through a field trip or special guest.



Children: Four Year Olds

Play with peers occupies much of the time at school, though the four-year-old may occasionally prefer to play alone. At this age, children are keenly aware of rules and seek organization and order; they often “tell on” others who are not following rules, and may seem bossy at times. “Best Friends” becomes an important topic of discussion. Strong, meaningful **bonds form between close friends**, with some children becoming almost inseparable. At the same time, the powerful threat of “I’m not your friend” is not uncommon, and can result in many hurt feelings. Slowly but surely, negotiation skills begin to fall into place. The four-year-old becomes more capable of solving conflicts with peers as the year progresses.



The four-year-old often revisits the **need for independence** that was prevalent as a toddler. This time around, he can do many more things on his own. Zipping and snapping skills emerge during this year, and some children will learn to tie shoes. The four-year-old thrives on the chance to **help with “grown-up” tasks** in the classroom, such as serving meals family style, caring for classroom pets, or helping clean up spills with a hand broom and dust pan. He may be equally willing to help out with simple tasks at home. The chance to make his

own peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich may be a slow and sticky process, but one that fills the four-year-old with pride!

Meaningful learning occurs primarily through play; this is a very busy age! The four-year-old **loves to experiment** with how things work, and will enjoy working with magnets, pulleys, pumps, ramps, and other “cause-and-effect” materials. With adult guidance and supervision, he can be very successful with “real” materials such as scissors and child-sized woodworking tools. **Pretend play** continues to be an important part of the day and is more complex and inventive now than at age three, reflecting television and movies, as well as community roles, such as firefighter, doctor, and chef. Teachers are often surprised to see their words and actions echoed precisely as children play school!

Outdoors, superhero play is common. Play with soccer balls, basketballs, and almost every other sort of ball is also popular! On the playground, these games loosely emulate the sports played by older children, though inventive rules are prevalent, and the games often include aspects of pretend play. Gross motor skills involving **balance**, such as standing on one foot, walking up and down stairs easily, and crossing a low balance beam, fall into place during this year. At times, however, the four-year-old will appear clumsy, bumping into peers and tripping over furniture. Often, this clumsiness results not from a lack of coordination, but because the child is focused, visually, on objects at a distance, rather than close at hand.



Four is perhaps one of the most talkative ages of all! As the year progresses, the child will understand and use terms to describe complex concepts relating to time, position, and distance. The four-year-old **loves new words**, and begins to use a wide array of adjectives to convey his meaning. Exaggeration is common. Silly rhymes, songs, and stories are very popular, and “bathroom talk” may emerge as a way of gaining attention and joking with peers. During this year, some children also start to form the connection between spoken and written language. Children may begin to use inventive spelling as they write letters to friends, make signs for a building block city, or take orders at a pretend restaurant.

Responding to four-year-olds

- Involve children in classroom tasks, such as serving meals, feeding pets, cleaning up messes, and creating displays of artwork. Foster a sense of community and shared responsibility.
- Provide opportunities for small groups of children to work together to complete a task.
- Incorporate real-life materials, such as envelopes, rubber stamps, and an old typewriter at a writing center; real pots, pans, and utensils for dramatic play; and simple tools for woodworking.
- Set the stage for children to carry out simple experiments, such as mixing colors; discovering items that sink or float; working with magnets, mirrors, magnifying glasses and other simple science tools; planting seeds and predicting/observing growth; or making shadows with a flashlight.
- Four-year-old children enjoy working with small objects. Nuts and bolts, buttons, seashells, and coins encourage sorting and classifying. (Supervise carefully to ensure that materials are not placed in mouths!)
- In addition to the ever-popular “housekeeping” props, offer dramatic play props to support new themes, such as veterinarian’s office, fire station, grocery store, or train station.
- Provide materials to encourage emergent writing skills. Consider providing notepads, small clipboards or chalkboards, and/or dry erase boards throughout the classroom, along with crayons, pencils, chalk and markers. Children will use the materials in a many ways as they play.
- Create “zones” for different kinds of play outdoors. At this age, children’s ball play takes up more space, as does active dramatic play. Tricycles, slides, and sandbox play continue to be popular, as well.

Children: Five Year Olds

Often a people pleaser, the five-year-old may ask permission to move from one activity to the next. The **need for approval** is strong; she often asks adults or peers to validate her work, with questions like, “Do you like my drawing?” Five-year-olds may also feel torn between the desire to please adults or to follow peers, and can challenge authority at times. Another quirk of this age: the five-year-old may be delightful at home but testy at school, or the other way around!

A shared sense of silliness creates close friendships; five-year-old children may find **humor** in “inside jokes” and often adore riddles, silly stories, and knock-knock jokes. At this age, children often **prefer to work or play with one or two friends** at a time, rather than with a larger group. Feelings are sometimes hurt when children feel excluded. At the same time, five-year-olds are becoming more sensitive to the needs and rights of others. **Acts of kindness** can be seen as she tries to help peers succeed and feel good. Sharing skills blossom during the five-year-old year, as long as the plan to share occurs prior to a serious conflict over a toy.

Children continue to thrive on **hands-on learning** throughout the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten years. Interest centers can provide concrete experiences while **fostering math, science, language, and fine motor skills**. **Children often** focus intently on their work at this age; scheduling long blocks of time to use materials encourage complex building block structures, creative pretend play, and highly detailed artwork. Five can be an age of perfectionism, and the child may create the same, or very similar, block structures or drawings day after day to ensure success. Rainbows and family portraits are popular subjects for drawings and paintings.

Writing skills continue to emerge and improve. Hand dominance is established in almost all children by age five. The young five-year-old focuses intently on writing, often gripping their pencil tightly and leaning over their work. She concentrates on each individual letter, and may tire easily. As the year progresses, children tend to write more quickly, but their work may become sloppy as quantity takes precedence over quality. Invented spelling is used frequently, often representing the beginning and ending sounds of words. The random nature of a preschooler’s stories gives way to **more structured storytelling** with a distinct beginning, middle, and end.

The child is **less talkative** now that at four. She has the ability to give elaborate responses but may not do so, preferring instead to give one-word answers. You may, however, hear her talking to herself, especially when she “**thinks out loud**” to work through problems while using hands-on materials. During the five-year-old year, her vocabulary will grow to 13,000 words or greater. **Reading** emerges for some children, but will not fall into place for another year or two for others. Acquisition of reading skills is dependent on changes in communication between the eyes and brain, as well as many other factors. Learning to read early does not always indicate that a child is gifted, just as late readers often go on to become avid and talented readers in the years to come.

The five-year-old continues to have **a strong need to move**. “Sit and Listen” times, such as circle time, are most successful if limited to periods of no more than 15 – 20 minutes. Outdoor



play is a favorite part of the day! If allowed, five-year-olds will become deeply focused on digging in deep sand or constructing with large outdoor blocks, planks, or crates. Locomotor skills such as galloping and skipping fall into place if they have not already, and she may learn to jump rope during this year. Structured playground games, such as “Duck, Duck, Goose” and “Red Light, Green Light” may be popular, though many five-year-olds **do not handle competition well** and may react poorly to games where they lose or have to sit out.

Responding to five-year-olds

- Schedule long blocks of time for play with a wide variety of open-ended materials.
- Allow projects to continue over several days or weeks; offer a safe place for materials to be stored between uses.
- Offer space and safe materials for open-ended outdoor construction play.
- Provide books that appeal to children with a broad range of interests and abilities. Remember that “beginning reader” books often have a highly limited plot that many children find boring; well-written and illustrated picture books continue to be popular, and some children enjoy having more complex “chapter books” read aloud to them.
- Limit use of worksheets or workbooks as much as possible. Instead, offer concrete experiences such as cooking with simple recipes, measuring using real tools, and studying live plants and animals.
- Encourage children to explore, test, and articulate theories.
- Offer opportunities for children to work alone, with a partner, and in groups of three or four.
- Some five-year-olds enjoy the opportunity to teach a game or read a story to a younger child. Self-esteem can blossom when they share their skills with others.
- Share a variety of non-competitive outdoor games, but allow the option of free play, as well. Parachute games are popular with fives, as are music and movement activities.

Sweet and Silly Sixes

The six-year-old values independence and likes to make decisions, but relishes encouragement from adults. In the classroom, the six-year-old can be a charming, eager participant who thrives on classroom routines and rituals. At the same time, he is highly sensitive to criticism, and may burst into tears or withdraw from interactions if his feelings are hurt. At six, it is hard to admit mistakes!

At play with peers, six-year-olds value rules and focus on fairness. Competitive activities are not ideal at this age; at six, damage is done if the child feels that friends or trusted adults think he is “no good” at something. He is becoming more understanding of differences in opinion, and much more adept at compromise than during the preschool years! Very much aware that he is a “big kid” now, the six-year-old may be highly protective of younger children, pets, and even insects!

In the classroom or afterschool environment, the six-year-old is a whirlwind of activity!



Quantity of work far outweighs quality of work for most children, but the process of hands-on activities, such as painting, working with clay, or creating a group newspaper is very much enjoyed! Fine motor skills are also very strong now; lacing and tying usually fall into place, and small motor toys like Lego and jigsaw puzzles are popular. The six-year-old loves to work with cause-and-effect tools, such as eye droppers, air pumps, and rotary beaters.

The child views the world much more logically now, and is eager to seek answers to “why” questions. Meaningful learning can be fostered by encouraging children to observe carefully and seek answers to questions; this is an excellent age for direct experiences related to science and social studies. Recitation of factual information, such as months of year, address, and birth date comes much more easily now, without the confusion and frustration younger children often experience if adults try to promote rote memorization in the preschool setting.

Reading proficiency continues to strengthen for many children, though some children will continue to build pre-reading skills during this year, allowing for the emergence of strong reading skills in the following year. Many six-year-olds enjoy reading environmental print aloud while passing road signs and billboards in the car and during trips to grocery stores and restaurants. Expressive and receptive vocabulary will double in the next year or so. Imaginative stories involving magic and fantasy are favorites of the six-year-old, who whole-heartedly believes in the tooth fairy and her holiday friends! Jokes and riddles are also immensely popular.



Some teachers describe the six-year-old as being obsessed with teeth and, indeed, the loss of baby teeth and eruption of permanent teeth is a major life event for children! Many sixes often experience a renewed “teething” period where they gnaw pencils, erasers, and even books and toys. Physically, the six-year-old may still seem awkward or clumsy. He may become discouraged when playing with older children who seem, to him, to be faster and better at almost everything. Active play is an important and beloved daily outlet. Balls and jump ropes are favorite playground equipment, and games involving hideouts or clubhouses are increasingly popular as the year progresses. The six-year-old tires easily, and does best with a long block of outdoor play time that allows him to cycle through bursts of intense activity, followed by quieter moments of rest and recovery.

Responding to six-year-olds

- Offer kind words of encouragement often, but limit criticism as much as possible.
- Create meaningful classroom rituals, such as participatory morning meetings, sharing times, and inside jokes.
- Limit competition indoors and out, focusing instead on cooperative games and activities.
- Encourage children to seek answers to questions that interest them, such as “What makes a river run?” and “How do tadpoles turn into frogs?” Offer hands-on experiences in response to children’s questions when possible.
- Continue to offer blocks and dramatic play materials, including puppets, dress up clothes, props, and dollhouses.
- Schedule field trips and guest speakers to provide direct experiences for learning.
- Consider allowing the six-year-old to teach a game or read a story to a younger child, fostering a sense of competence and allowing him to explore his nurturing nature.
- Create a print-rich environment.
- Encourage children to join to big projects, such as murals, class newsletters, and cardboard box constructions.
- When possible, limit plastic materials, offering materials made of metal, wood, and cloth instead. Real materials appeal to the senses and naturally spark more careful, focused work and play.

Skillful Sevens

Seven can be a dramatic age! From the child's perspective, everything is wonderful in the world, or everything is terrible; seemingly small events can color the child's day! She generally prefers the company of peers to adults, and has several very close friends. The seven-year-old is highly concerned with concepts of right and wrong; "tattling" may surface or resurface during this year in correlation with her desire to ensure that everyone follows the rules and everything is "fair".

At seven, children can be highly competitive, with a strong desire to be "perfect" and "best". Concerns about popularity may emerge during this year. She may imitate the words and actions of peers as she experiments with various roles. Parents may be surprised when new behaviors are tried for the first time at home! When playing with peers, the seven-year-old retains some of the self-critical tendencies that she had at age six, but is now better equipped to handle winning and losing without cheating or becoming upset.

The seven-year old continues to enjoy dramatic play, and will use real props to craft complex pretend play scenarios. Restaurant, office, and school are popular pretend play themes. Logical



reasoning continues to emerge, and she experiences strong feelings of satisfaction when she can solve problems and figure out puzzles; meaningful conclusions can be drawn from simple science experiments. The ideal classroom/group setting provides a balance of active and quiet pursuits, including chances to work with groups of peers, a partner, and alone. Large-scale, child-directed projects create momentous learning opportunities for the seven-year-old!

Reading fluency and writing proficiency continue to grow during this year. Many children, however, seem to feel "burned out" on typical reading assignments and paper and pencil tasks. Schoolwork and homework may become a struggle. Perhaps one of the best ways to hone skills at this age is to inspire children to use reading and writing in fresh, new ways, such as contributing to a web page or PowerPoint slide show, producing a script for a puppet show, conducting

a simple interview, or creating and using recipes. During the out-of-school hours, it is ideal to offer choices, allowing the child to rest or relax, socialize with friends, or enjoy age-appropriate games and toys.

Physical hobbies are common during this year; children often pursue interests such as gymnastics, skating, soccer, and bike riding. Fun, low-key lessons may help build skills, but it is important, too, for adults to remember that "dabbling" in a wide variety of activities can create a healthy, life-long love of exercise that may not be accomplished through intense, focused training in any given sport. Long blocks of free play outdoors offer the seven-year-old freedom to roam, explore, and move.

Responding to seven-year-olds

- Create fun and meaningful group rituals to foster a sense of belonging.
- Encourage children to talk through and solve problems, but provide supervision and support to prevent deliberately unkind behavior towards peers.
- Board games and card games are popular. Foster creativity by allowing children to build structures with playing cards and invent their own rules and variations for games.
- The seven-year-olds' strong sense of fairness and justice makes this a great age to incorporate community service projects, such as collecting food and supplies for a pet shelter.
- Talent shows and karaoke are popular, and are often enjoyed most when done just for fun, rather than to determine a winner.
- Offer simple experiments to explore properties of magnets, air, water, etc.
- Cooking experiences are greatly enjoyed, and children are able to participate in a variety of ways. Consider preparing and eating real foods, or concocting your own bubble solution, play dough, or slimy putty!
- Offer outlets for drawing and creative writing, but avoid mandatory paper and pencil tasks if at all possible.
- Ensure that classroom materials are in good repair. Frustration, boredom, and lack of focus can prevail if the art supplies are dried out, the books are torn and tattered, and the puzzles are missing pieces!
- Gardening can be highly rewarding at this age. Children can fully understand the process and marvel at the transformation from seed to plant. Similarly, consider creating a classroom nature center that allows children to observe the metamorphosis of caterpillars or tadpoles, or to incubate and hatch eggs.
- Encourage children to hone skills through the use of real tools for measuring, constructing, and creating. Woodworking and work with clay provide many valuable experiences.
- Provide long blocks of free choice time that allow for active play and quiet contemplation.

Magnificent Middle Years: 8, 9, and 10

Eight, nine, and ten year olds are developing strong connections with adults outside the home. Teachers, coaches, and other trusted grown-ups have a tremendous influence as mentors and role models. One-on-one conversations with adults allow the child to feel competent, capable, and valued. She is often helpful and cheerful in the classroom, but may become sullen if she feels ignored.

Free play often finds children polarized by gender; boys tend to play with other boys while girls tend to play with other girls, and the groups may avoid or antagonize one another. At this age, children are easily embarrassed and may seek to conform to a group rather than risk standing out by voicing a differing opinion. In addition, children become increasingly self-conscious about their talents and weaknesses, sometimes avoiding activities like dancing, singing, or drawing if they do not feel as competent as peers.

This group demonstrates a greatly increased attention span and can be thoughtful and reflective. In the classroom, “busy work” and worksheets may meet with great resistance. On the other hand, teachers find that projects that encourage reasoning and appeal to the child’s idealistic nature are well received and often result in excellent educational outcomes. Interest-based activities are popular with the eight-year-old, and she can now embrace hobbies such as photography, origami, and weaving with more success than in the younger years. Clubs are very popular, fostering a sense of belonging and allowing children to explore shared interests. Children also rally behind group efforts such as bake sales, lemonade stands, and coin drives. Not only do these activities provide a common goal, but they also appeal to the “middler’s” fascination with money!

At eight, nine, and ten children can spend long stretches of time engaged in planning and building activities. Materials such as Lego, K’nex, and Erector sets can fascinate the eight-year-old for hours. She also enjoys using tools to take apart real electronics, such as no-longer-working radios, alarm clocks, and telephones. Board games continue to be popular, and the simple games of the early elementary years are slowly replaced with more complex games, such as Clue, Monopoly, Chess, and Blokus. The 8-10 year old appreciates having a system and space to save Lego constructions and half-finished boards games and jigsaw puzzles to return to later.

Outdoors, she thrives when given the choice to join in group games or sports, explore climbers and swings with friends, or just “hang out”. Children are growing rapidly during this year, and often seem restless and “wiggly”. In addition to outside time, she enjoys frequent opportunities to move throughout the day. Possibilities include active games, such as “Simon Says”, during transition times; opportunities to walk around, stand, sit, or stretch out on a soft rug in the indoor environment; and even materials that can allow limited gross motor play in the classroom, such as a hopscotch mat or Nerf basketball hoop.

Responding to Eight-, Nine-, and Ten-Year-Olds

- Take time to talk with children about their thoughts, ideas, and interests.
- Offer a wide variety of choices and select activities that are open-ended and do not lead children to judge their efforts as “good” or “bad” in comparison to others.
- Use stories, role play, and discussion to encourage children to care for one another and “do the right thing”.
- Offer materials and guidance to encourage children to explore new interests. Possibilities include children’s animation software, microscopes, musical instruments, and materials for making jewelry. Consider offering clubs to allow children with similar interests to work together.
- Invite guests to share topics of interest with the children. Visitors such as park rangers, athletes, musicians, and artists can spark new interests, provide hands-on experiences to support learning, and offer meaningful interactions with adults.
- Provide a wide variety of appealing, age-appropriate materials for construction, as well as puzzles and board games.
- Eight-year-olds are likely to be offended by materials designed for younger children, such as Duplos or beginning reader books. Avoid materials that will lead children to believe that they are too old for the provided activities.
- Avoid mandatory writing projects in afterschool and out-of-school environments, but encourage children to explore the many purposes that writing can serve. They may enjoy scripting a play, writing and illustrating books for younger children, creating secret codes, or writing letters to pen pals.
- Value children as competent and capable learners, and offer materials and experiences in response to their interests. An enthusiastically motivated group of middlers can accomplish almost anything.

Supporting the Development of Self-Regulation and Social Competence

You are supporting the development of self-regulation and social competence with infants as you:

Create an environment of love and trust through warmth and responsive care
Gradually guide infants into regular sleeping and eating patterns, yet meeting individual needs.

You are supporting the development of self-regulation and social competence with toddlers as you:

Set up an environment that is safe to explore
Model appropriate ways to manage your emotions

You are supporting the development of self-regulation and social competence with preschoolers as you:

Use a variety of positive guidance methods, such as noticing appropriate behavior, modeling appropriate behavior, and smiling at the child.
Redirect activities. Know the children in your group so well that you can direct a child into a favorite activity and away from unacceptable behavior.
Help children to use words to express feelings and frustration rather than hitting, kicking, and biting. Be careful not to give children a ready-made reason for unacceptable behavior, "Did Mary make you mad? Is that why you hit her?" Children need to learn that they, not others, are responsible for their own feelings and behavior, that behavior can be controlled, even if their feelings cannot.

You are the development of self-regulation and social competence with older children as you:

Connect what they learn to the way they live. Learning must be related to living.
Show them they are needed. Give them meaningful responsibilities and tasks.

Build Relationships



PRACTICE THE FIVE *Ls* DAILY

Love the children unconditionally. You may not like what they do, but you love them. Let them know it.

Listen to them. They will let you know when their needs are not met or when they want to share a secret.

Limit them. All children need limits for their protection, but limits must be appropriate for the developmental age.

Laugh with them, not at them. Everyone needs to laugh, to share joys, to release emotions for survival.

Let them live. Let a two-year-old act like a two-year-old; don't expect him/her to be a five-year-old



Building Relationships with Children

Interactions with others help shape our sense of who we are and influence how we will relate to others in the future. Positive relationships with children, with their families, and with our colleagues benefit everyone. Through our relationships and interactions with children, we contribute to the child's need for attachment, self-regulation, social competence, protection, and healthy role models.

We have learned from research that close, positive teacher-child relationships are important. Children have higher language, literacy, cognitive, and social abilities. They show reduced anxiety, depression, and stress. Your relationships and interactions with children influence their development and learning in powerful ways. Here are some suggestions for building close relationships and positive interactions.

Spend time with the children



Think about the strong relationships in your life. Maybe you are thinking of family members, friends, or co-workers. Can you recall how those relationships developed? You have probably spent a lot of time with those people. If you want to build relationships with children, spend as much time as you can with groups of children and with each child. The more time you spend with your children, the more you come to understand and appreciate them.

Share experiences with the children

Can you recall some key experiences you have shared with family or friends? Think of the stories that you often tell when you get together. Shared experiences help build our relationships with others. With your children, find ways to celebrate the experiences that you share. Take photographs, record individual and group stories, recall previous experiences during conversations.

Be positive

Do you want to build a relationship with someone who frequently criticizes or ignores you? Probably not. Children are no different. Be sure that your comments and responses to children are overwhelmingly positive. Sometimes you have to look hard for those positive things, but you and the child will benefit if you make the effort to focus on the positive. Remember that frequent negative experiences are associated with less optimal brain development.

Be curious

People are interesting, and children are especially interesting. Be curious! Throughout the day, allow your curiosity to lead you toward a deeper understanding of each individual child. Instead of punishing or resenting a child's challenging behavior, get curious.



- What's going on with that child?
- What might she be thinking?
- What does she need?
- How might she be viewing the situation?
- What is she trying to communicate?
- What can I do to support her?
- How can I help her learn more acceptable behaviors?

Curiosity can be a valuable tool for building positive relationships with children.

Listen

Suppose a close friend is telling you about a report from the doctor or describing a parenting dilemma. Think about the way you listen to that friend. You are probably focused on the friend, trying to understand what is being said. You are probably not doing other things while listening to your friend.

Children have valuable thoughts, ideas, and feelings. They deserve our best listening skills! Look at children while they are speaking. Make responsive comments and ask open-ended questions. Your comments and questions support children in the following ways.

- Children learn to recognize and understand their feelings.
- Children learn to organize their thoughts and ask good questions.
- Children learn how to investigate a problem and find answers to their questions.

Building Relationships with Families

Supporting the child

We don't work with child in isolation. We are a part of the child's world that includes his home, extended family, neighborhood, and the larger community. Consistency is important for developing trust and for optimal brain development and learning. When adults communicate and cooperate, the child feels more secure and is free to explore and learn. Knowing the family helps us know the child. Knowing us helps the family know that we care about their child. When we collaborate with families, we can build a stronger foundation for children than either home or school could provide alone.



Enhancing communication

When we have a positive relationship with families, we are more likely to communicate effectively when concerns arise. If I know you, I am more likely to ask you about my child's lost hair bow. Without that relationship, I may not mention it to you, but will surely tell everyone else about your lack of attentiveness to my child. Similarly, it may be easier to address concerns about the child if we have a good rapport with the family.

Enriching the program



Families who have an established relationship with teachers tend to participate in and support the program. They attend meetings and conferences, they pitch in on spring cleaning day, they suggest a good field trip site or fund raising idea. Families can bring knowledge and experiences that enhance the curriculum. Good relationships are good marketing. When I feel a personal connection to my child's program, I will probably have positive feelings about the program. I will probably tell my family, friends, and associates about the program.

How to Support Children's Learning

Have you taken time to think about how important your job is? You spend many hours and days with your children. You are a strong influence in their lives.



You can help the children learn and love to learn by

- Providing an enriched, stimulating environment in which children can move.
- Extending their opportunity for learning.
Here's an example. The children are talking about cats. You show them a picture of a cat and then read a story about a cat. Then you arrange for a real cat to visit your group of children.
- Building a positive relationship. Show that you as a person they can trust. Plan some one-to-one time with each child; just three minutes a day will make a difference.
- Setting up a warm, welcoming, relaxed environment to give each child a feeling of security.
- Being a good model. Remember, children will follow your example. If you want them to speak softly, you speak softly.
- Providing opportunities for each child to be successful.
- Respecting and accepting each child for the unique individual he or she is.
- Talking *with* children, not *at* them. Talk about putting on boots, walking in the snow, the first robin, or the new baby. Remember that a conversation requires everyone to talk and to listen.
- Helping them develop self-control. Develop a warm, trusting relationship will help the child practice self-control.

Create the Learning Environment



Safety First

One of the most essential services you provide for the children is to ensure their safety and well-being. You need to know how to make your center safe for children and how to prevent accidents and reduce the frequency injuries. Most children are curious and view things as interesting to touch or taste, not as safe or hazardous. Take a child's eye tour of your program, inside and outside, to make a thorough safety check. Here are some suggestions you may need to implement.

The *Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements* book is your basic guide for health and safety procedures. Be sure that you understand and follow these requirements, and other regulations and standards that apply to your program. Ask your administrator about your program's risk management plan. Some general safety considerations are highlighted below.

Closely supervise children

- Teach children safety procedures, such as fire safety and passenger safety.
- NEVER leave children unattended. There must always be at least one staff member with children, whether it is one child or a group of children.
- Remove any visual barriers in the children's activity areas, so that teachers can supervise children more easily.
- If children are transported by your program, be sure that all safety regulations are followed: seat belts, safety seats, passenger roster, etc.

Be alert to potential safety hazards in the environment

- Cover electrical outlets.
- Put high latches on doors that are not used by children.
- Be sure furniture is sturdy, so that children can't pull it over. If necessary, bolt shelf units to the wall.
- Check furniture and equipment for loose nails, screws, splinters, and sharp corners.
- Tape down corners of area rugs.
- Daily safety checks should include removing or repairing broken toys and equipment.
- Remove toys and materials with small pieces that might be choking hazards for young children.
- Store cleaning supplies and medications in a locked cabinet, out of children's reach.
- Check the outdoor play area daily. Remove debris and litter. Repair equipment that may be broken or have loose nails/screws or splinters. Be sure gates are latched. All plants within the play area must be nontoxic.

Respond to emergencies

- Be sure you are familiar with the evacuation routes (such as fire drills) and shelter locations (such as for severe storms). These should be posted throughout the facility.
- Maintain a list of emergency contact information for each child. Keep this list in a designated space that is easy for adults to reach.
- Know basic first aid procedures and infant/child CPR procedures.

Here's to Good Health!

Every precaution must be taken to insure that illness is kept to a minimum in your facility. As children arrive each day, you can quickly observe their physical and mental health. Follow your program's procedures for reporting any symptoms or indicators of illness or injury.

All staff must be familiar with symptoms of childhood illnesses to determine possible infectious diseases. Center regulations should clearly state actions to be taken if a child comes to the center ill or if illness develops during the day. Any child who is injured, or becomes ill and unable to participate in daily activities, should be isolated and supervised until the parent has been notified and the child is picked up.

Providing an environment that contributes to the prevention of illness is important in the operation of any program. The learning environment should be

- Clean
- Properly lighted
- Temperature controlled
- Adequately ventilated
- Furnished with appropriate sized furniture
- Free from tension and stress
- Staffed by adults who practice good health habits and who assist children to develop basic health habits

Practical but simple health habits for staff

- Washing hands frequently and thoroughly
- Serving nutritious meals and snacks
- Cleaning and sanitizing often all toys and objects used and "mouthed" by infants
- Following sanitary procedures for preparing, storing, and labeling bottles
- Eating at tables with the children
- Observing the facility's rules about medication for children
- Annual physical check-up for teachers
- Follow sanitary diapering procedures

Staff should help children to establish the-following good health habits.

- Brush teeth thoroughly every day
- Eat nutritious meals and snacks
- Rest at suitable intervals during the day, depending on the needs of the child
- Play outside when weather permits; active physical play indoors on inclement weather days
- Wash hands; use liquid soap and individual towels



Reporting Known or Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

All employees of child care facilities are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. (Arkansas Child Maltreatment Act, 2009, Arkansas Code 12-18-101, Subchapter 4) This means that if you have reasonable cause to suspect child maltreatment, you are required by law to report your suspicion. Failure to report is a violation of state law.

You licensing specialist can advise you on indicators of abuse and neglect, and on procedures for reporting suspected maltreatment. Your program's administrator can also inform you of your program's policies and procedures.

For complete information, go to <http://www.arkansas.gov/reportARchildabuse>.

Elements of a Good Preschool Schedule

- **A good schedule is predictable.**
The sequence of events is always the same, although the actual clock time may vary a bit.
- **A good schedule is flexible.**
Flexible time-blocks allow for both predictability and flexibility. While the sequence of events is predictable, the teacher can adjust the length of time for each block according to the children's involvement or restlessness.
- **A good schedule includes a variety of developmentally appropriate activities.**
Children should be able to explore a variety of materials. Activities should include all areas of development: physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and language and literacy. Children should be allowed to make choices and pursue their interests. The schedule should balance child-initiated activities and adult guidance and support.
- **A good schedule balances active and quiet, and indoor and outdoor, learning experiences.**
Alternating active and quiet activities helps children avoid fatigue and boredom and helps them maintain self-control. Children need both indoor and outdoor experiences every day.
- **A good schedule includes at least one hour of outdoor play in suitable weather.**
Children will experience outdoor play for a portion of every day unless weather conditions are extreme.
- **A good schedule provides a reasonable pace for children's participation.**
A hurried schedule opposes a positive learning environment, leading to boredom and conflict. A helpful schedule allows time for children to complete tasks in a satisfying way.
- **A good schedule recognizes developmental differences in attention span.**
Most preschool children can sustain interest in self-initiated activities for relatively long periods of time. During group times, 10-20 minutes is the expected attention span for most three to five year olds.

Sources: Gestwicki, C. (1999). *Developmentally appropriate practice: Curriculum and development in early education*, 2nd ed. Albany, NY: Delmar.
Courson, D. (2010). *Better beginnings guide*. Little Rock: Arkansas DHS Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

Sample Daily Schedule for Infants Birth to 18 months



The schedule for infants and young toddlers is flexible. Diapering, feeding, and sleeping are based on children's **individual schedules**.

Floor time includes a variety of planned and spontaneous activities; opportunities for language, large and small motor development, dramatic play, and cognitive learning are always available at these times.

Arrival	Breakfast, diaper checks, floor time
8:30	Floor time, planned individual activities
9:45	Clean up, diaper checks/toileting
10:00	Snack
10:15	Outdoor activities
11:00	Floor time, diaper checks/toileting, set up for lunch
11:45	Lunch time, individual activities, begin rest time
12:30	Rest time, individual activities
2:30	Diaper checks/toileting, snack
3:00	Outdoor activities
3:45	Floor time
4:30	Departures, individualized activities, floor time

Sample Daily Schedule for Toddlers

18-36 Months

Arrival	Free choice activities in learning centers/interest areas
8:00	Breakfast
8:30	Free choice activities in learning centers/interest areas Teachers interact with children to support development of skills and concepts.
10:00	Outdoor Play
11:00	Lunch
11:45	Choice of selected quiet activities, such as reading books, working puzzles, building with Duplo blocks
	Diapering and toileting
12:15	Nap
2:15	Diapering and toileting
	Snack
2:45	Outdoor Play
3:45	Free choice activities in learning centers/interest areas
5:30	Close



Sample Daily Schedule for 3-5 Year Olds

7.5 hours

Arrival Choice of “early bird” activities on tables

8:00 Breakfast (wash hands, set table, eat, clean-up)

8:30 Group meeting to discuss plans for the day’s activities.

8:40 Free choice activities in learning centers
Teachers interact with children to support development of skills and concepts.

10:05 Clean-up

10:15 Outdoor activities

10:45 Music and stories while children prepare for lunch

11:00 Lunch

11:30 Free choice activities in learning centers

12:40 Clean-up

12:45 Rest time

2:15 Restroom and snack

2:45 Outdoor activities

3:20 Children prepare for dismissal

3:30 Dismissal




Sample Daily Schedule for 3-5 Year Olds

Full Day

Arrival	Free choice activities in learning centers
8:00	Breakfast
8:30	Group meeting
8:40	Free choice activities in learning centers Teachers interact with children to support development of skills and concepts.
10:20	Clean-up
10:30	Outdoor play
11:15	Music and stories while children prepare for lunch
11:30	Lunch
12:00	Relaxing, wind-down activities such as taking a walk, working puzzles, reading books, telling stories with flannel board figures Prepare for rest time
12:20	“Bedtime” story
12:30	Rest time
2:00	Restroom and snack
2:30	Free choice activities in learning centers
3:20	Clean-up
3:30	Outdoor play
4:30	Free choice activities in learning centers
5:30	Close

Sample Daily Schedule for School-Age Youth Before School

Arrival	As children arrive, they participate in quiet activities (card games, puzzles, reading, listening to music with headphones, coloring, reviewing homework, or resting if still tired) and prepare for breakfast.	
7:00- 7:30	Children who eat breakfast before coming to the program continue quiet Breakfast activities. As they finish breakfast, children move back to activities.	
7:30- 8:10	Children participate in short term, quiet activities that do not require significant setup or cleanup, or projects that can be saved if not completed and staff-led (for example, an ongoing macramé project, cutting out pictures for activities scrapbook collection). A staff member leads or oversees a low-key group game or activity (for example, charades, cooperative games, storytelling, mixing a batch of cookies for later in the day, morning stretching exercises).	
8:10 – 8:25	Children help clean up the interest area and gather belongings for school. Cleanup	
8:25- 8:30	Children are released to go to school.	

Source: Caring for Children in School-Age Programs: A Competency Based Training, Volume One, by Derry G. Koralek, Roberta L. Newman and Laura J. Colker (Teaching Strategies, Inc.)

Sample Daily Schedule for School-Age Youth After School



- 3:30 – 4:00 Wash hands and afternoon snack.
- 4:00 – 5:00 Gross motor outdoor play activities such as bicycling, basketball, dancing
Explore and investigate the natural world
- 5:00 – 5:30 Short-term activities of interest such as scrapbooking, photography,
homework, reading, board games

Good Transitions

Transitions--those changes in activity when things can go seriously awry. Our ability to manage transitions affects the child's sense of safety and security, which are essential to optimal growth and development. When we plan appropriately for transitions, the day is more pleasant and less stressful for the children for us. Here are some reminders about the effective management of transitions.

- *Minimize the number of transitions.* Too many transitions during a day take time away from other activities and give a disjointed feeling to the day.
- *Give advance warning that a change is about to take place.* Don't flick the lights. Do walk around to each area and remind children that they have 5 more minutes to play. Better yet, appoint a "5-minute" helper who holds up 5 fingers and quietly announces "5 more minutes" as he/she walks around the room.
- *Give children familiar cues about change.* Sing a certain song, play a specific tape, or use another familiar routine. Children behave according to the habits formed from repeated experience. Transition cues encourage children to cooperate more readily.
- *Make sure that directions given for children's participation are clear and specific.* Give only one or two directions at a time, make eye contact, and touch children gently.
- *Begin the next activity as soon as two or three children are ready.* Plan for transitions in which children always have something to do and do not have to wait for everyone to be ready.
- *Allow for movement of a few children, rather than the whole group.* Use transition techniques to move children in pairs or small groups from one activity to another.
- *Give children classroom responsibilities and opportunities to assist peers.* In other words, delegate to the children! They thrive on opportunities to make a real contribution to their world.
- *Use imagination and playfulness to help children keep focused during transitions.* Fly like birds, bounce like bubbles, float like butterflies.
- *Plan transitions.* How will you give advance warning of changes? What do you want children to do during transitions? What will the adults do during transitions? How can we have fun doing this? Plan for transitions just as you plan for art experiences and stories.

Adapted from: Gestwicki, C. (1999). *Developmentally appropriate practice: Curriculum and development*, 2nd ed. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers.

Addressing Inappropriate Behaviors

First, *look at the environment*.

Is there anything that can be changed in the room arrangement, materials, activities, or daily schedule that will reduce or prevent this behavior? How might I re-structure the environment to encourage appropriate behaviors? We could prevent many inappropriate behaviors by fine-tuning the environment to better match the needs and developmental levels of the children.

Second, *look at yourself*.

Is there anything I can change about the way in which I am interacting with the child that might reduce or prevent this behavior? How might I encourage appropriate behavior? Do I need more knowledge about child development? Are my expectations too high or too low? Do I need more knowledge about positive guidance strategies? Do I need more knowledge and/or skill in planning appropriate learning experiences? Do I need to reduce my stress level so that I can respond more appropriately to the child? The person that I am most likely to be able to control is myself. So, I have to consider: Is there anything I am doing or saying OR not doing or not saying that is affecting the child's behavior?



Finally, *look at the child*.

Do I need more knowledge about this child? Observe the child closely in a variety of settings at different times of day and on different days of the week. Do any patterns emerge? What might this child need in order to develop self control and learn appropriate behaviors? Do the learning experiences appropriately challenge the child? Is this behavior merely annoying, is it mildly disruptive, or is it truly outside the range of typically expected behaviors?

We sometimes hear this suggestion: "Find out if there's something going on at home." The more information we have, the better we can help the child. It is essential to work with families to support the child's learning and development. Knowing that there has been a death in the family or that grandma has come to visit for a month can help us understand the possible reason for changes in the child's behavior.

However, **a word of caution** is in order. We have little or no control over factors in the child's life outside of our program. Certainly knowledge of those factors can be helpful, but we should remember that the two areas in which we can make the biggest difference are the program environment and ourselves.

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Planning Materials for Play and Learning

Carefully selected materials can make the difference between meaningful play that leads to significant learning and aimless, unproductive play. Consider the following points as you choose toys and learning materials.

Safety note: Be sure that all materials are clean, safe, and age-appropriate. Do not use small objects with children who are likely to put such items into mouths, ears, noses. Know your children and plan accordingly. Use great care and good judgment when collecting and using materials with children. All materials must be clean and must not be sharp, toxic, or potentially harmful. All activities with young children require close supervision.

Age appropriate, with a bit of challenge. Are the toys safe and sturdy for these children? Choose materials that are suitable for the range of development and interests within your group. Do the materials offer a bit of a challenge to children? Toys that have been mastered don't sustain interest for long. Materials that fail to intrigue children or excite possibilities are not likely to facilitate successful play.

Skills and concepts. What are your learning goals for children? Select materials that will provide many opportunities for children to develop and apply those skills and concepts. Offer materials that will allow you to observe the child's progress and to support the learning.



Supply and demand. Do you have enough toys? Children need plenty of toys from which to choose. You will also need duplicates of popular toys to reduce disputes and waiting time. Do children need additional materials? Observe children's play, and add props and materials that will extend and enrich their learning.



Variety. Do you have an interesting assortment of materials? Be sure to provide classic toys such as dolls and Legos and open-ended materials like play dough, blocks, and puppets. Also include materials not usually found at home—finger paints, musical instruments, hammer toys (Koralek, 2004, *Spotlight on Young Children and Play*, p. 31).

Authentic and natural. Have you included authentic materials? Provide real objects that are safe for children to use in their play—mixing bowls, baskets, rulers, measuring cups, clothespins, maps. Does the learning environment include both items from nature and items made from natural materials? Plastic is sturdy, colorful, and usually safe, but doesn't provide the same sensory richness as wood and fabric. In addition, children need indoor nature experiences such as counting seeds, using leaves in creative art, and floating pieces of bark in the water table.



Rotated and inviting. Are children losing interest in a toy? Sometimes children simply need some guidance in new ways to use the toy. Or perhaps it's time to replace that toy with something they haven't played with recently. Establish a system for appropriately rotating learning materials. Are materials inviting to children? Display toys in sturdy containers on labeled shelves. Avoid stacking containers so that children can easily take what they need and put away at clean-up time.

The Block Play and Construction Center



As children play, they gain knowledge of how the world works and they find their place in the world.

Construction experiences, like playing with blocks, strengthen the foundations of math, science, reading, and writing.

Children also develop physical coordination, build self esteem, and learn how to work with others.

There is no substitute for a good set of unit blocks. Many types of blocks are available, but the Most versatile and durable for preschool and school-age children are unit blocks. Unit blocks (and their “big brother”, hollow blocks) represent a financial investment for many programs. Although blocks seem expensive initially, they should last for many years and in the long run actually cost only pennies a day.

Materials	Examples
Unit Blocks	Wooden
Large hollow blocks	Wooden
Cardboard	Bricks, boxes (large and small), tubes, flat pieces
Homemade blocks	Clean, empty food boxes
Building surface	Clear floor space and/or a low platform
Small vehicles	Cars, trucks, trains, planes
Animals	Small vinyl and wooden animal (domestic, farm, forest, ocean, and zoo animals)
People	Small vinyl people of different race, culture, ability, and occupation
Other accessories	Road signs, trees, fences Ruler, tape measure, protractor, a level Related dramatic play props
Loose parts	Empty thread spools, clothespins, craft sticks, paper cups, chenille stems, buttons, smooth wood scraps, PVC pipe, soda straws, twigs, wheels, baskets, buckets, small balls, maps

The Dramatic Play Center

Dramatic play is not only one of the great joys of childhood, it also offers abundant opportunities for learning. Children develop interpersonal skills, particularly cooperation and conflict resolution, and improve their language and problem solving abilities in pretend play.

The mainstay of this center is housekeeping. However, as children's interests change and as they gain experience in the world, the theme of the center may change. Some areas of interest might be a doctor's office, a store, a bank, or a post office. Props should be added to reflect the children's interests.



Materials	Examples
Dress-up clothes	Skirts, dresses, men's and women's jackets, hats, and shoes Uniforms (different professions) Jewelry and accessories (eyeglasses with no lenses)
Child-sized furniture	Table and chairs, sink. Stove, cabinet, baby bed, refrigerator
Cooking equipment	Pots and pans, utensils, dishes
Dolls	Variety of dolls, doll clothes, paper dolls, wooden dolls. Dolls should represent different races, cultures, and abilities.
Doll furniture	Doll bed, high chair, stroller, doll house
Non-breakable mirror	Full length mirror, handheld mirrors
Fiction and Nonfiction Books	How-to books, cook books, books about dramatic play themes
Thematic props	Materials and furnishings chosen based on the student's current interests
Play food	Include a variety of types and different ethnic foods
Dolls	Include different races, cultures, clothes, abilities
Loose parts	Artificial flowers, fabric squares (about 1 yard each), clothespins, scarves, ribbons, tote bags, suitcases, backpacks, stuffed animals, baskets, flashlights, telephones, magazines, calendars, empty food containers

The Art Center



People sometimes wonder about the value of creative play such as art and music. But good teachers know that activities such as these have tremendous value for healthy brain development and the development of many skills necessary for success in life. Materials that stimulate the senses are especially important as children learn about sights, sounds, and texture.

Many connections have been made between exposure to the creative arts and later success with both literacy and math skills.

Materials	Examples
Drawing materials	Crayons, markers, colored pencils, chalk, pencils
Paper	Different types, textures, sizes, colors
Background	Canvas, wood, paper
Paint	Tempera paint, water colors, finger paint, roll top bottles
Paint tools	Paint brushes of different sizes, shapes, and texture Household tools : potato masher, spatula, fly swat, soda straws, toothbrushes
Fasteners	Tape, glue sticks, white glue, stapler, paper clips, rubber bands
Sculpting materials	Play dough, Model Magic, clay (air dry)
Tools	Wire cutters, scissors, stapler, hole punch, rulers
Wood	Wooden pieces, wooden frames
Display	Space to display art
Cleaning supplies	Smocks, wipes, paper towels, running water, soap
Loose parts	Wire, cardboard tubes and boxes, feathers, buttons, sequins, pom-poms, cotton balls, magazines, fabric, coffee filters, soda straws, chenille stems, thread spools, ribbons, yarn, string, blocks of Styrofoam, paper towel tubes, leaves

COLORING PAGES are not creative and should not be in the art center. Staying in the lines does not teach the children any skill and does not allow a child to be creative.

The Music Center

Music and rhythm is a part of everyone's life. It is a large part of our heritage and culture. Musical skills help develop large and small muscles and eye-hand coordination. Marching, clapping, and singing require mental and physical coordination. The music center is the place where instruments go. It can be a creative center, if you provide interesting materials and invite the children to explore. You will need a CD player the children can use and plenty of space for movement.

Materials	Examples
Musical instruments (Homemade or commercial)	Cymbals, drums, triangles, tambourine, wood blocks, guitar, ukulele, maracas and other shakers, castanets, xylophone, bells, piano, rhythm sticks
Listen and record	CD Player, iPod, docking station, microphone
Types of music	Classical, pop, jazz, rock, reggae, rhythm and blues, rap, folk, country; children's songs and lullabies; songs in different languages
Accessories	Scarves, capes, costumes, flags, umbrellas, canes, hats, baton, pom-poms, microphones, non-breakable mirror
Music	Written music in song books and on charts
Charts	Songs and fingerplays
Loose parts	Craft sticks, chenille stems, empty food containers, stuffed animals, dolls, hollow blocks, fabric pieces (about 1 yard each)



Library Center

In the library center, children begin to understand that books are exciting friends that can be enjoyed. They play and experiment with words. They begin to notice that letters are symbols for the words they say. They learn to tell stories and events in sequence. Young children learn to read pictures and older children read words. The children are developing their listening, speaking, reading, and "writing" skills.

The library center needs to be a quiet, well-lighted, warm, cozy, inviting place. You might have children's art work on the wall, a soft doll to read to, and a big comfortable pillow to lie on and read books.



Materials	Examples
Commercial books	Fiction, fantasy, non-fiction
Child-made books	Illustrated and dictated or written by students
Charts	Fingerplays, rhymes, poems, group stories
Re-telling and creating stories	Flannel board, magnet board, Velcro board Figures for re-telling and creating stories
Group books	Stories (written, dictated, or illustrated by children based on group experiences)
Listen and record	Prerecorded books (CD, I-tunes), CD player, iPod, docking station, microphone
Puppets	Cloth or knitted puppets, sack puppets, pop-up puppets, box puppets, finger puppets, puppets on a string
Loose parts	Magazines, variety of paper, pencils, pens, markers, alphabet stamps, plastic/wooden alphabet letters, name cards, chalkboard and chalk, textured alphabet letters, story-related props (stuffed bear, toy steam shovel)

Table Games and Manipulatives

Children are working with activities that develop small muscles and eye-hand coordination. Putting a puzzle together involves problem-solving and configuration (seeing the shapes of things and how they fit together). In this center, children learn how to work independently, how to classify, how to put materials together, and how to take them apart.

Materials	Examples
Interlocking materials	Legos, unifix cubes, bristle blocks, nuts and bolts, gears, Mr. Potato Head, train tracks or race tracks, Lincoln Logs
Small blocks (less than 2")	Dominoes, magnetic blocks, wooden cubes, table blocks
Sticks, pegs, pegboards	Branches, Tinker Toys, pegs of different sizes, Lite Brite
Modeling dough	Play dough, Model Magic, clay (air dry)
Lacing/ Stringing activities	Beads (various sizes, shapes, colors), lacing cards, laces
Toys that zip, snap, button	Dolls with clothes to fasten, dressing frames
Links	Chains, pop beads
Puzzles	Picture puzzles, knob puzzles, floor puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, parquetry blocks, tangrams, pattern blocks
Loose parts	Jar lids and bottle caps, beads, buttons, sea shells, small boxes and cups for stacking and nesting



Discovery (Math/Science) Center

This is a DOING center rather than a "look but don't touch" center. You want the children to find out or discover for themselves.

The children are developing the thinking skills, as well as using their senses to explore the world.

You want them to develop concepts of numbers, geometry, classifying, sequencing, measuring, and predicting,

In the discovery center children to are thinking, investigating, and solving problems.



Materials	Examples
Natural objects	Leaves, sea shells, rocks, different types of wood, pine cones, bird's nest, seeds, acorns
Living things	Nontoxic house plants, pets (hamster, fish, bird, crab, snails), ant farm, worm farm, butterfly kit, eggs that hatch , herbs
Books	Non-fiction books with realistic photos or drawings
Math/science games and puzzles	Matching games, sorting games, tangrams, pattern blocks, shape sorter, stacking rings
Charts	Photos, drawings, models of natural science
Tools	Magnets, items that sink or float, sound cans, translucent paddles (variety of colors), magnifying glasses, slopes for racing things, rain gauge, levers, pulleys, pendulums with different weights, items to taste. Thermometers, microscopes, tape measure, yard stick, ruler, clock, balance scales, tweezers/tongs
Loose parts	Buttons, jar lids and bottle caps, soda straws, craft sticks, counters (teddy bear, vehicles, dinosaurs, etc.), tape, play dough, water, muffin cups, coffee filters, graph paper, pencils, muffin pan

Sand and Water

Sand and water provide children with sensory, small muscle, and eye-hand coordination experiences. Sand and water stimulate creativity and develop skills in math, science, and communication.

If you do not have a sand and water table, use plastic dish pans or baby bathtubs. Children need plastic aprons in the water area. Add and remove accessories according to the children's interests and needs. The more often you have the sand and water areas open, the more skilled children become in using them.

Materials	Examples
Storage	Sand table, water table, tub, dishpan, bucket
Materials	Top soil, sand, water, mud
Tools	Liquid measures (1/2 pint, pint, quart, gallon), funnels, sifters, molds, shovels, scoops, spoons, trowels, rakes, sand/water wheels, turkey baster, spray bottles, pumps, watering can, sand combs, whisk, rolling pin, medicine droppers, measuring cups and spoons, plastic salt and pepper shakers, coffee scoops
Loose parts	plastic tubes, containers (variety shapes and sizes), bowls, cups, toy animals, items to sink or float, sponges, dolls, boats, cars, people, soap, food coloring, ice cubes, PVC pipe, corks, ping pong balls, craft sticks, combs, rocks, twigs, soda straws



The Outdoor Learning Environment

The outdoor learning environment is more than a place for children to exercise or to let off steam. It is a space that helps them grow socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually.

An outdoor learning environment does not mean that children will have “lessons” outdoors. Rather, it means that teachers plan the outdoor space as carefully as they prepare the indoor environment. The outdoor learning environment is a play space that allows children an opportunity to grow, learn and develop to their fullest.

Does your outdoor learning environment include these 5 types of play?

Nature Play includes trees, water, boulders, plants, flowers, shrubs, vegetables, and ground textures. Animals, such as rabbits or guinea pigs, can also be included. Nature play easily engages all senses. Plants, for example give children an opportunity to observe, listen, smell, touch, and even taste. Dirt, rocks, sand, and water provide natural manipulatives.

Adventure Play invites children into activities they may not be able to do in their more structured indoor environment. Things can get messy and it is totally appropriate! Adventure play allows children to dig, hammer, saw, and construct (with supervision, of course!). Children can use their imagination as they build, working in a cooperative spirit and developing a sense of responsibility to each other and to the environment.

Active Play provides numerous play opportunities to meet children’s active needs at various developmental stages. Different surfaces can accommodate a variety of activities.

- Hard surfaces for tricycles, wagons, painting, lining game boundaries, etc.
- Grass for running, tumbling, rolling, tag games, ball play, etc.
- Sand as a softer surface that doubles as a great play material for digging, sifting building molding, etc.
- Add a bit of water and texture change, and play opportunities increase.

Active play promotes gross motor activities to the fullest. Equipment includes varied climbing and play structures that promote physical and perceptual coordination, as well as fantasy play and spontaneous games.

Quiet Learning brings many indoor activities outdoors. This area should have tables, easels, patio setting, shade structures that allow for reading, writing, storytelling, painting, clay, markers, crayons, puzzles, other arts and crafts, and a water play table. This area is a great place to eat lunch or snack, or have class meetings, story time, or group time.

Quiet Play is encouraged with niches, enclaves, playhouses, benches, and loose parts to support activities such as role playing, watching, talking, and other fantasy play. It is also a place for children to get away from peers and engage in solitary play or to just kick back and watch the clouds or listen to the birds.

Plan the Curriculum



THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

“Through their play, they discover the world...and themselves.”
-- Fred Rogers (Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood)

Play is the most efficient, powerful, and productive way for young children to learn the information and gain the skills they need.

They increase their **knowledge** of the physical world, knowledge that is a critical foundation for academic pursuits. Through first-hand experience with real objects, children begin to understand how the world works. Play experiences **reduce stress** levels, which increase the efficiency of thinking and learning.

Many **social skills** can only be learned through experience. Play provides the opportunity to develop skills for solving social problems—negotiation, compromise, cooperation, sharing, taking turns. Children develop flexibility and the ability to consider different perspectives. Young children who have abundant dramatic play experiences seem to be more socially competent.

Interacting with others during play strengthens the child’s **communication** skills. Children practice using speech correctly and increase their vocabulary. Conversation skills are enhanced as children play.

As children use materials, interact with others, and master new tasks and skills, they develop a sense of control of the environment. They gain a **feeling of competence** and a satisfying enjoyment in their ability to learn. Through play they develop dispositions for perseverance and risk-taking.

Play integrates critical brain functions and learning domains. Adult-directed learning activities are often narrowly focused and lack this important **integration**, which brain research shows is very important to development.

In play, the child always behaves beyond his average age; above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development.

Lev Vygotsky
Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Mental Processes

THE ADULT ROLE IN CHILDREN'S PLAY



The most important part of the child's day is the time spent in meaningful play experiences. Children's playtime is not staff break time. Adults play an essential role in supporting successful play.

- ❑ **Provide interesting, open-ended materials.** Carter and Curtis (1996) refer to this role as "provisioning the environment". Effective teachers spend a lot of time in gathering real objects and toys that will invite children to explore and adapt as they play.
- ❑ **Provide adequate space and time for play.** Successful play experiences require plenty of space to move and to manipulate materials and equipment in the environment. Satisfying play requires an abundance of uninterrupted time that allows the play to develop.
- ❑ **Play with children when it is appropriate.** When adults enter into the play, they model how to play and they demonstrate that play is valuable. In addition, adult participation in children's play helps the child reach beyond what he would be able to do on his/her own. (Vygotsky called this "scaffolding".) As you join children's play, follow the children's direction without dominating the play activities. Know when not to play—recognize those times when you can provide more effective support by observing.
- ❑ **Observe and respond to children's play.** Closely observe children as they play. Look for emerging skills, approaches to problem solving, frustrations, and social interaction. As the play develops, you may offer thought-provoking comments, ask open-ended questions, or offer additional props. At times children will need your help in negotiating conflict.
- ❑ **Plan experiences that will enrich the play.** As you observe, notice where children seem to have inadequate or incorrect information. Also notice variations on the theme of the play. Based on your observation, invite family and community members to visit your group, arrange field trips, and bring in appropriate children's books. These opportunities will add to the foundation from which children develop their play.

A Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum

A developmentally appropriate curriculum requires thoughtful planning. Consider the following guidelines as you plan and implement learning opportunities for children.

Interesting: Children give their full attention to activities and learning materials, with little prompting from the teacher. You should have many hands-on activities and materials that children can use with little or no assistance from the adults.

Integrated: It is difficult to compartmentalize learning. A good learning opportunity addresses multiple areas of development and content areas. For example, acting out the story *Going on a Bear Hunt* can develop language, literacy, social, and physical skills.

Sequenced: Each day and week builds on the experiences from the preceding day and weeks. Organize the activities so that children are ready for the next step. This pacing allows children to build their understanding as you support their efforts.

Connected: Know your children and plan a curriculum that is meaningful to them. Consider what experiences your children have had and build on those experiences. Plan activities and provide materials that connect to the child's home and culture, as well as to individual interests.

Engaging: The focus of the curriculum should be on opportunities for children to actively explore the world around them. By investigating topics of interest to them, children learn to ask good questions, predict results, and solve problems.

Comprehensive: Every day should include activities that support growth and development in all areas: social, emotional, language, cognitive, and physical. Provide many opportunities for children to explore and acquire key concepts in all subject areas, such as reading, writing, math, science, social studies, physical education, the arts. Be sure that your curriculum supports your program's learning goals and standards.

Effectively implemented: Your curriculum should allow and encourage flexibility. A good curriculum will encourage you to make adjustments based on the interests and needs of your group of children. Throughout the day, the curriculum should provide a predictable routine, but also allow flexibility for unanticipated opportunities for learning.

Linked to assessment: Your curriculum should enable you to observe and assess each child's progress. You use the results of your assessment to make adjustments in the curriculum for the group as a whole and for individual children.



Does the Environment Support the Curriculum?

Is the space **safe** for children to explore?

Are electrical outlets covered? Is there space to move easily from one area to another?
Are hazardous items secured out of children's reach?

Does each space **match the type of activity** expected to occur there?

Are there cushions and pillows in a cozy reading area? Is there open space for large constructions in the block area? Are there places in the art area for paintings and sculptures to dry? Is there a place to store unfinished work until the next day?
Is there ample space for movement in the music area?

Does the space allow for **flexibility**?

Can the space be rearranged by the children? Can adjacent space be annexed to expand the play area? Can materials be used in more than one way? Can materials be moved from one area to another to accommodate children's play?

Is the space **comfortable and warm**?

Does the area have child-size equipment? Do displays reflect the lives of the children in the group? Is there a variety of textures? Are there more natural materials than plastic and metal?

Does the space invite children to **wonder, explore, and imagine**?

Are there many interesting objects? Are there tools for pursuing investigations? Is there an abundance of open-ended props (loose parts)? Are there items from nature?

Does the space encourage the development of **relationships** among children and adults?

Are the sand/water tables positioned so that children stand on opposite sides, facing each other? Are there comfortable places for adults to sit while interacting with children? Is there a place to be alone? Are there places to be with friends?

Does the space encourage **self-expression**?

Are writing materials readily available in activity areas (paper, pencils, crayons, markers, pens, clipboards, chalk)? Does the art center contain varied materials? Are there designated places for children to display their creations?

Does the space appeal to the **senses** and the child's awareness of **beauty**?

Is there natural lighting? Is the space colorful without being overwhelming? Are displays well-designed and attractive?

They're Not Just Playing – They're Learning!

Most of us would agree that children learn through play. Children learn best when they are fully engaged in hands-on activities with materials and people of their choice. If children are learning through play, shouldn't we be teaching through play? What should we be doing and saying in order to teach through play?

Let's begin with some definitions. When you think of the word *teacher*, what image comes to mind? Do you see someone like Miss Corey, who always had a special activity for her second graders on Friday afternoons? Do you visualize a person like Mrs. Meyers, who assigned seat work while she worked with reading groups? Maybe you picture Ms. Jones, the coolest teacher in fifth grade because she went bungee jumping during summer vacation! Perhaps you remember a favorite teacher from kindergarten or band or senior English. All of these are teachers, using their individual styles and talents to teach.

What, then, is *teaching*? Is it imparting knowledge? Is it providing instruction? Is it guiding someone else's learning? The correct answer to these questions is, "Yes." The common element among the teachers described above seems to be *helping others learn*. An effective teacher knows and uses different teaching strategies for different skills and concepts, as well as for different students. For young children and for older children in out-of-school settings, teaching that supports learning through play should be one of our most important strategies.

Teaching through play is a combination of teacher-assisted and child-initiated learning opportunities. The adult's role varies at different points in the play and learning processes. To be successful in teaching through play, we must have a good **understanding of child development**, of the expected sequence for learning. The adult must **know as much as possible about each individual child** in order to facilitate learning and play.

The elements of teaching through play can be organized into three actions: observe, interpret, and respond. We can develop skill in each of the three actions that will enhance our ability to teach through play.

Observe the play

Use observation to **get to know children**. Notice what and with whom the child chooses to play, how the child responds to different people and situations, the prior knowledge the child brings to the play scenario, apparent misconceptions, and emerging skills. Remember that listening to the child is an important part of observing.

Use observation to **gain insight into behavior**. Where and when did the behavior occur? Who was present? What was happening in the environment? What happened before this behavior occurred? What did the child seem to be feeling, needing, or intending?

Use observation to **assess learning and development** over a period of time. Tools such as teacher's notes, photographs, and checklists document children's progress toward learning goals.

Use observation to **solve problems**. Is there frequent conflict in the dramatic play center? Are children reluctant to clean up? Focused observations can provide useful information on how to resolve these problems.

Interpret the play

Use a series of observations to help you identify **children's needs and interests**. What seems to stand out as you review your observations? Observe over a period of time, at different times of day.

Multiple observations can highlight **evidence of skills** that are emerging or mastered and **concepts** the child is exploring. After reviewing a series of observations, a picture of the child's progress begins to emerge. Compare the child's overall performance to standards, such as benchmarks or performance indicators.

Identify areas in which **specific instruction** might support the child's learning. Does the child need to acquire skills or competencies that would enable more successful play and effective learning? Could these skills/competencies best be gained through teacher-assisted instruction?

Summarize **how the child interacts with others**. Through play children demonstrate their preferences and competencies in the social/emotional areas. Good observations allow you to create a summary of the child's ability and approaches.

Identify particular **times or spaces that seem to be challenging** for a child or for the group. Careful observation can provide information to guide you in making adjustments to reduce or eliminate problems.

Respond to the play

Good observations and valid interpretations lead to appropriate responses. Sometimes your response will be an immediate comment, question, or added prop. At other times, your response occurs later as you make changes to the environment or the curriculum.

Adjust the environment. This may mean rearranging furniture, changing the schedule, or adding/removing equipment. What might make it easier for children to engage in meaningful play?

Remove/add materials. Consider the level of challenge, the number of pieces, the interest demonstrated by the children. What might enrich the play? How can you support new directions for the play?

Make a comment or ask a question. An adult’s well-timed comments and questions help children sustain their play and gain new meaning. Avoid quizzing children and interrupting the flow of their work. Appropriate open-ended questions and comments can support the child’s thinking and guide them toward satisfying solutions.

Focus on the process. Ask questions that help extend the child’s play. “That is a noisy truck. What is it honking at?”*

Support problem solving. Help children define the problem and learn negotiation skills. Encourage them to think about alternatives. Suppose one child has grabbed a marker from another child, who then cries. The adult might say, “It looks like there is a problem here. Can each of you say what just happened?” If the children are too young and lack verbal abilities, the adult can say, “It looks like you both need that marker. Next time, you can tell Lupe, ‘That’s mine!’” The adult then offers another marker. (Koralek, 2004, *Spotlight on Young Children and Play*, pp. 30-31)

Do nothing. Sometimes the best response is to continue observing and interpreting. *Too often adults intervene at the wrong time, short-circuiting the child’s learning process.* Literally think twice before commenting or questioning. If the children are safe (physically and psychologically), it may be better to wait. Continue observing their approaches to solving the problem.



Resources



Our Favorite Children's Books



A Chair for My Mother (Vera B. Williams)
A Tree Is Nice (Janice Mae Udry)
Abuela (Arthur Dorros)
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (Judith Viorst)
Anno's Counting Book (Mitsumasa Anno)
Bark George (Jules Feiffer)
Bear Shadow (Frank Asch)
Bread and Jam for Frances (Lilian and Russell Hoban)

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See (Bill Martin, Jr.)
Building a House (Byron Barton)

Caps for Sale (Ephyr Slobodkina)
Chicka Chicka Boom! Boom! (Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault)
Chicken Soup with Rice (Maurice Sendak)
Color Dance (Ann Jonas)
Corduroy (Don Freeman)
Curious George (H.A. Rey)
Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti (Anna Grossnickle Hines)

Everybody Needs a Rock (Byrd Baylor)
Favorite Nursery Rhymes from Mother Goose (Scott Gustafson)
Frederick (Leo Lionni)
Freight Train (Donald Crews)
Frog and Toad (Arnold Lobel)

Go Away Big Green Monster (Ed Emberley)
Goodnight Gorilla (Patricia McKissack)
Goodnight Moon (Margaret Wise Brown)
Growing Colors (Bruce McMillan)
Growing Vegetable Soup (Lois Ehlert)
Guess How Much I Love You (Sam McBratney)

Happy Birthday, Moon (Frank Asch)
Happy Christmas, Gemma (Sarah Hayes and Jan Ormerod)
Harold and the Purple Crayon (Crockett Johnson)
Harry the Dirty Dog (Gene Zion)

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie (Laura Numeroff)
In the Tall, Tall Grass (Denise Fleming)
Ira Sleeps Over (Bernard Waber)
Jamberry (Bruce Degan)
Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? (Nancy Carlstrom)

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse (Kevin Henkes)
Lyle, Lyle the Crocodile (Bernard Waber)

Machines at Work (Byron Barton)
Maisy (Lucy Cousins)
Make Way for Ducklings (Robert McCloskey)
Mama, Do You Love Me? (Joose)
Mike Mulligan (Virginia Lee Burton)
Mouse Paint (Ellen Stoll Walsh)
My Friend Rabbit (Eric Rohmann)

Noisy Nora (Rosemary Wells)
Off to School Baby Duck (Amy Hest)
Olivia (Ian Falconer)
On Mother's Lap (Ann Scott)
Over in the Meadow (Wadsworth & Carter)
Owen (Kevin Henkes)
Owl Moon (Jane Yolen)

Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me (Eric Carle)
Rain (Peter Spier)
Stone Soup (Marcia Brown)
Sylvester and the Magic Pebble (William Steig)

The Carrot Seed (Ruth Krauss)
The Doorbell Rang (Pat Hutchins)
The Little Red Hen (Margot Zemach)
The Napping House (Audrey Wood)
The Snowy Day (Ezra Jack Keats)
The Story of Ferdinand (Munro Leaf)
The Stray Dog (Marc Simont)
The Three Bears (Paul Galdone)
The Very Busy Spider (Eric Carle)
The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Eric Carle)
The Wheels on the Bus (Paul O. Zelinsky)
There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly (Simms Taback)
Tumble Bumble (Felicia Bond)
When I Was Young in the Mountains (Cynthia Rylant)
Where the Wild Things Are (Maurice Sendak)
Where's Spot? (Eric Hill)
Whistle for Willie (Ezra Jack Keats)
William's Doll (Charlotte Zolotow)



Books for Teachers

For those who work with infants, toddlers, and twos, and older

Active Learning for Infants (Debby Cryer, Thelma Harms, Beth Bourland)
Active Learning for Ones (Debby Cryer, Thelma Harms, Beth Bourland)
Active Learning for Twos (Debby Cryer, Thelma Harms, Beth Bourland)
The Complete Creating Complete Learning Spaces Book for Infants and Toddlers (Rebecca Isbell and Christy Isbell)
Prime Times, 2nd ed. (Jim Greenman, Anne Stonehouse, and Gigi Schweikert)
Simple Steps (Karen Miller)
Story Stretchers for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos (Raines, Miller, Curry-Rood, and Dobbs)
Things to Do with Toddlers and Twos (Karen Miller)
Toddlers Together (Cynthia Catlin)

For those who work with preschoolers and older

Active for Life (Steve Sanders)
Beautiful Stuff! (Cathy Topal and Lella Gandini)
Block Play (Sharon MacDonald)
Building Structures with Young Children (Ingrid Chalufour and Karen Worth)
Creative Art for the Developing Child (Clare Cherry)
Designs for Living and Learning (Deb Curtis and Margie Carter)
Discovering Nature with Young Children (Ingrid Chalufour and Karen Worth)
Don't Move the Muffin Tins (Bev Bos)
Easy Songs for Smooth Transitions in the Classroom (Nina Araujo and Carol Aghayan)
Exploring Water with Young Children (Ingrid Chalufour and Karen Worth)
From Parents to Partners (Janis Keyser)
Hey, Kids! Out the Door, Let's Explore (Rhoda Redleaf)
Inspiring Spaces for Young Children (Deviney, Duncan, Harris, Rody, and Rosenberry)
Learning Together with Young Children (Deb Curtis and Margie Carter)
Linking Language (Robert Rockwell, Debra Hoge, and Bill Searcy)
Making Make-Believe (MaryAnn Kohl)
Please Don't Sit on the Kids (Clare Cherry)
Picture Science (Carla Newumann-Hinds)
Reflecting Children's Lives, 2nd ed. (Margie Carter and Deb Curtis)
Sift and Shout (Granovetter & James)
Story Stretchers (Shirley Raines and Robert Canady)
The Complete Learning Center Book (Rebecca Isbell)
The Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom (Patti Gould and Joyce Sullivan)
The Portfolio and Its Use (Sharon MacDonald)
The Power of Observation, 2nd ed. (Judy Jablon, Amy Dombro, and Margo Dichtelmiller)
Water Works (Randy Granovetter and Jeanne James)
Young Investigators, 2nd ed. (Judy Harris Helm and Lilian Katz)

For those who work with school-age youth

Activities for School-Age Child Care, Rev. Ed. (Barbara Blakley)
Discipline in School-Age Care, Control the Climate, Not the Children (Dale Fink)
Summer Program Tips, Strategies, and Activities (Rich Scofield)

Fingerplays and Songs



Five Little Monkeys

Five little monkeys jumping on the bed
One fell off and bumped his head
Mama called the doctor and the doctor said,
"No more monkeys jumping on the bed!"

Four little monkeys jumping on the bed...

Three little monkeys jumping on the bed...(and so on).

Open, Shut Them

Open, shut them (open and shut your hands).
Open, shut them.
Give them a little clap, clap, clap.
Open, shut them.
Open, shut them.
Put them in your lap.

Wave them...

Creep them...

I Have Little Turtle (Vachel Lindsay)

I have a little turtle,
He lives in a box,
He swims in the water
And he climbs on the rocks.
He snapped at a minnow
He snapped at a flea
He snapped at a mosquito
And he snapped at me.

He caught the minnow
He caught the flea
He caught the mosquito
But he didn't catch me!

One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

One, two, buckle my shoe.
Three, four shut the door.
Five, six pick-up sticks.
Seven, eight lay them straight.
Nine, then a big fat hen.



Ten In A Bed

There were ten in a bed and the little one said, "Roll over, roll over." *rolling motion*
So they all rolled over and one fell out.

There were nine in the bed and the little one said, "Roll over, roll over."
So they all rolled over and one fell out....

This is repeated until you get to the number one. Each time "roll over" is said, rolling motion is dramatized.

There was one in the bed and the little one said, "Good night!"

Six Little Ducks

Six little ducks that I once knew
Little ones, big ones, tall ones too
But the one little duck with the feather on her back
She led the others with her quack, quack, quack
Quack, Quack Quack
She led the others with her quack, quack, quack

Down to the river they would go
With a wobble wobble, wobble wobble to and fro
But the one little duck with the feather on her back
She led the others with her quack, quack, quack
Quack, Quack Quack
She led the others with her quack, quack, quack

Home from the river they would come
With a wobble wobble, wobble wobble ho ho hum
But the one little duck with the feather on her back
She led the others with her quack, quack, quack
Quack, Quack Quack
She led the others with her quack, quack, quack



I Love You

(Tune: This Old Man)

I love you,
(Babies arms in, pointing to self)

You love me
(Babies arms extended out)

We're as happy as can be!
(Rocking baby side to side)

Here's a great big hug
And a kiss from me to you,
Won't you say you love me too!
(Rocking baby side to side)

Johnny Works with One Hammer

Johnny works with one hammer,
one hammer, one hammer

Johnny works with one hammer
Then he works with two

(1 hammer - 1 fist pounding on knee)
(2 hammers - 2 fists pounding on knee)
(3 hammers - 2 fists 1 foot)
(4 hammers - 2 fists 2 feet)
(5 hammers - 2 fists, 2 feet and head)
(after 5: "Then he goes to sleep.")

The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round
Round and round, round and round
The wheels on the bus go round and round
All through the town

The lights on the bus go blink, blink , blink...

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish

The doors on the bus go open and shut,
open and shut , open and shut...

The money on the bus goes clink, clink, clink.....

The driver on the bus says, "Move on back,
Move on back, Move on back"...

The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep.....

The people on the bus go up and down,
up and down, up and down.....

The babies on the bus go "Waah, waah, waah".....

The parents on the bus go "I love you. I love you.
I love you.".....

Repeat first verse.



I Am Special (Tune: Frere Jaques)

I am special!
I am special!
Look at me, you will see
Someone very special,
Someone very special,
Yes it's me!
Yes it's me!

Five Little Speckled Frogs

Five little speckled frogs
(Hold up and bop five fingers)

Sat on a speckled log
eating a most delicious bug
(Pick off and eat bug)

Yum, yum, yum (Rub tummy)

One jumped into the pool
(One finger motions hopping into pool)
where it was nice and cool,

Then there were four green speckled frogs
(Hold up four fingers)

Glub, Glub, Glub

Sing down to 0 frogs - last line then is:
Glub, Glub, Glub - G - L - U - B (deep voice)

Wiggles

I wiggle my fingers
I wiggle my toes
I wiggle my shoulders
I wiggle my nose
Now no more wiggles are left in me
So I will be still as still can be.

Additional Resources

Arkansas State University Childhood Services
<http://chs.astate.edu>

TAPP Registry
<http://professionalregistry.astate.edu>

DHS Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
<http://www.accessarkansas.org/childcare>

Better Beginnings
<http://www.arbetterbeginnings.com>

Arkansas Early Childhood Association
<http://www.arkansasearlychildhood.org>

Southern Early Childhood Association
<http://www.southernearlychildhood.org>

National Association for the Education of Young Children
<http://www.naeyc.org>

Arkansas Out of School Network
<http://www.aosn.org>

Arkansas Family Child Care Association
<http://arkansasfamilychildcareassociation.com/>

