

Office of Catholic Schools
Archdiocese of Chicago

**Early Childhood
Handbook**

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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to assist administrators, pastors, school boards and teaching staff to prepare, organize, and operate an early childhood program within an Archdiocesan school or parish. These guidelines will assist in developing and maintaining a quality program serving young children 3-5 years of age. A high quality program is one in which the cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of young children are met.

Terms & Definitions

Early Childhood - As defined by the IL Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Licensing Standards, early childhood means the years from birth through age 6. As defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), early childhood means the years from birth through age 8.

Preschooler – Children from 3-5 years of age.

Kindergartener – Children of 5-6 years of age currently enrolled in kindergarten that are eligible to attend first grade during the next school year.

IL DCFS Licensing Standards – Requirements and standards developed by the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services for the operation of day care centers.

NAEYC Accreditation – A voluntary evaluation system sponsored by a professional organization, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which determines whether an early childhood program meets nationally recognized criteria for high quality. In the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago, NAEYC accreditation encompasses both the preschool and kindergarten programs.

OCS – The Office of Catholic Schools. The administrative office, departments and staff for the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Though the definition of early childhood is broad, for the purposes of this handbook, unless distinguished otherwise, the term “early childhood” refers to preschool and kindergarten children, ages 3 through 6.

Section I

GUIDELINES FOR OPENING OR EXPANDING A PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Listed below are the major steps involved in planning and starting a preschool program that will benefit young children, their families, and your school and/or parish community.

1. Doing the Groundwork:

- Contact the Office of Catholic Schools for technical assistance and support.
- Explore the market. Find out what other preschool programs are offered at neighboring schools, childcare centers, park district programs, etc.
- Visit and observe other local programs for young children. Go to the IL Early Childhood Asset Map www.iecam.com to research early childhood programs in your area.
- Obtain a copy of all applicable policies & procedures (Office of Catholic Schools, Archdiocese of Chicago), program standards (IL DCFS licensing) and criteria for high quality (NAEYC, National Health & Safety Performance Standards) as well as learning standards (IL Early Learning Standards),
- Survey families in the elementary school, parish, and larger community to assess the need for/and type of program desired.

2. Planning the Program:

- Facility – Where will the preschool classroom be located?
“Rooms normally occupied by preschool, kindergarten, or first-grade pupils shall not be located above or below the story of exit discharge.” Section 11-2 Means of Egress, NFPA-101 Life Safety Code, National Fire Protection Association.
Contact the Archdiocese’ Office of Facilities & Construction and request a Project Manager to visit your school and look at the space to make sure it meets all requirements and codes.
- School calendar – The preschool program operates on the same calendar and during the same hours of operation as the rest of the elementary school.
- Classroom Space – All local and national standards and criteria recommend a minimum of 35 sq. ft. per child. For a group size of 20 children that equals a minimum of 700 sq. ft.
- Bathrooms – Bathrooms and/or sinks are not required to be in the classroom. *“Toilets and lavatories shall be readily accessible to the children. If toilets are not located near the children’s activity areas, an adult shall accompany children four years of age or younger.”* (IL DCFS licensing standards, Section 407.340). Child sized toilets and sinks are only required for *“new construction and any remodeling or renovation that alters, renovates or replaces existing plumbing or plumbing systems.”* (IL Plumbing Code) *“If toilets and lavatories are not child-sized, non-absorbent safe steps shall be provided.”* (IL DCFS licensing standards, Section 407.340) The use of a step is acceptable provided it is safe, secure and designed for this type of use. There are also toilet seats that are designed to fit on regular sized toilets that allow for a safer use by a small child. A local plumber would be able to assist with this.
√Please refer to the *Physical Environment* section under “Designing the Preschool or Kindergarten Program” for the ratio of toilets & sinks required per number of children.

- Program configuration - Full day, half day or a combination of both? Every day or 2, 3, or 4 times per week?
- Age groups for preschool - Three year olds? Four year olds? Or mixed age groupings? Entrance age requirements should be clearly stated in the school's parent handbook. If the school follows the state's law for entrance into kindergarten (age 5 on or before September 1 of that year), then four year olds must be 4 on or before September 1, and 3 year olds should be 3 on or before September 1.
- Before and/or after school care – Before and/or after school care is an option to the preschool program. The fees for before and/or after school may not be included in the annual preschool tuition. The Before and/or After School Program operates only on days when the elementary school is in session. Will preschoolers participate in this option? If so, it is recommended that they be cared for separately from children above 8 years of age.
- Teaching staff – A ratio of 1 adult for 10 children is recommended for preschool, therefore a teacher aide should be hired for a group of more than 10 children.

	IL DCFS Licensing Standards	NAEYC Criteria	Recommended Max Group Size
Recommended adult/child ratio for Preschool	1:10	1:10	20

- Teaching staff Qualifications – Refer to “Job Descriptions” and “Hiring Process-Teachers” Office of Catholic Schools Handbook for School Administrators
- Curriculum – See the Curriculum section of this handbook as well as the OCS Resource Portal <http://ocs.archchicago.org>; also “Instructional Day” Office of Catholic Schools Handbook for School Administrators

3. Determining How the Program will be Financed:

- Identify funding sources. What fundraising efforts can be used for start-up costs? Start-up costs should, at least, be based on the furniture and materials needed for the classroom (refer to Minimum Equipment & Supplies Checklists in the “Creating the Learning Environment” section of this handbook) as well as other equipment necessary for administration of the program, and current teacher salaries.
- Prepare a budget. Once the type of program is decided upon, an annual operating budget should be planned. *“Tuition and fees for the preschool program will be set to cover the full cost of the program.”* Fiscal Management Handbook for Catholic Schools, 2007, Archdiocese of Chicago, Office of Catholic Schools

4. Choosing a Model

Any preschool program that is operated as an extension of an elementary Catholic school within our Archdiocesan school system and under its administration is exempt from IL DCFS Licensing. However, the preschool shall serve only children 3 years of age or older and must follow the governance, administration, calendar, fiscal, personnel, and educational policies and procedures of the Office of Catholic Schools and Archdiocese of Chicago.

Before beginning any preschool, it is important to establish its structure. It may be:

- I. Part of an existing K-8 elementary school.
- II. The beginning grade of a newly opened elementary school.
- III. An early childhood center, with preschool, kindergarten and primary grades.

If a preschool program is ...	Then ...	IL DCFS Licensing	Super-vision
I. Opened as part of an existing K-8 Catholic elementary school in the Archdiocese of Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permission from the Principal and the appropriate Juridic Person is needed with input from the school community 	Exempt	Principal
II. The beginning grade of a newly opened Catholic elementary school in the Archdiocese of Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permission from the Cardinal, Vicar and Supt. of Schools is needed to open a new school in the Archdiocese of Chicago 	Exempt	Principal
III. The beginning grade of an early childhood center (PreK-3) with preschool, kindergarten and possibly primary grades that feed into other Catholic elementary schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permission from the Cardinal, Vicar and Superintendent of Schools is needed to open a new school 	Exempt	Principal

Preschools that are <u>not</u> under the administration of a Catholic elementary school in the Archdiocese of Chicago			
If a preschool program ...	Then ...	IL DCFS Licensing	Super-vision
1. Is a stand-alone early childhood program serving a parish or parishes that does not have an elementary school or does not operate under an elementary school's administration Or Remains open on days/hours during the year when the elementary school is not in session	A full time childcare director must be employed on site, in a non-teaching capacity, if more than 50 children are enrolled full day.	Required	Pastor, Child Care Director
2. Serves children under the age of 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It must apply for DCFS licensing. A full time childcare director must be employed on site, in a non-teaching capacity, if more than 50 children are enrolled full day. 	Required	Pastor, Child Care Director

Operating what the state considers to be a day care center in violation of state law can carry serious liabilities for all involved in the administration of the program.

5. Making the Decision

It is crucial that an informed decision, with appropriate permissions and input from all stakeholders, be made. A preschool program can enhance the elementary school and increase enrollment, but a commitment must be made to support the distinct needs and requirements of early childhood education to ensure its continued success and growth.

6. Promoting the Program

Once the decision has been made that a preschool program is needed, the following steps are recommended:

- Contact the Office of Catholic Schools for marketing information
- An announcement of the proposed program should be put in the school newsletter, on the school web site, and the parish bulletin, on a weekly basis, if possible
- Families with preschool children can be specifically recruited with a flyer or phone call about the program. The names of families with preschool age children can be obtained from school records and/or parish Baptismal and registered families' records.
- An article announcing the program should be placed in the local newspapers, including those of other languages, if applicable
- Flyers/posters promoting the program should be placed in local businesses
- The appropriate use of other electronic media, including social networking, should also be explored

Resource:

Getting Ready: Preparing to House Your Pre-Kindergarten Program is a tool available free from the Illinois Facilities Fund. Getting Ready is an interactive, online tool to help nonprofits plan ahead for housing a new Pre-K program. In three steps, the tool will help an organization assess its space needs, evaluate the fit of any facility with its program goals, and identify any renovation or modification needs.

http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/getting_ready.pdf

Section II

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ORGANIZATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Structure of the Preschool or Kindergarten Program

Admission Policies

Age Requirement

It is recommended that entrance age requirements follow the state of Illinois' entrance age requirement for kindergarten and then be applied to preschool. The school should admit only those children eligible under the school's written admission policies and age requirements. Accepting underage children is not advised. Accepting children as they turn 3 or 4 during the school year is also not advised.

Under no circumstances should children younger than 3 be accepted.

Children entering:	Must be...	On or Before...
Kindergarten	5 years of age	September 1 st of the current school year
Therefore, children entering:	Must be...	On or Before...
Four year old Preschool	4 years of age	September 1 st of the current school year
Three year old Preschool	3 years of age	September 1 st of the current school year

Readiness

According to the Illinois School Code, districts may choose whether to consider an assessment of a child's readiness for school. Children who will be 5 years old on or before September 1 may begin school. Based upon an assessment of a child's school readiness, a school district may choose to permit a child to attend school prior to that date, or it may choose not to do so. In a school district operating on a year-round school basis, children who will be age 5 within 30 days after a term starts may begin to attend school that term. For the full text of this code, see Illinois school code, 105 ILCS 5/ § 10-20.12. School year-School age (<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/documents/010500050k10-20.12.htm>).

The Office of Catholic Schools does not conduct readiness assessments.

Children entering First Grade

IL School Code was amended, effective 1-21-10, to reflect the following change:

“Based upon the school’s assessment of her readiness, a child who will be 6 years old on or before December 31 may begin first grade in the fall under certain conditions. She must have attended a non-public preschool, continued her education at that school through kindergarten, and been taught by an appropriately certified kindergarten teacher.” Source: (105 ILCS 5/10-20.12) (from Ch. 122, par. 10-20.12) Sec. 10-20.12. School year - School age.

Toilet Trained

Children must be toilet trained prior to school entry. This policy should be clearly stated in the school parent handbook and early childhood parent handbook. Accepting children wearing diapers or disposable pull-ups requires that the program have a designated diapering area with an accessible hand washing sink (IL DCFS Licensing Standards 407.340). Accepting children who are not toilet trained compromises the license-exempt status of our early childhood programs.

However, even when children are toilet-trained, accidents do occur. All families must provide a change of clothes to be kept at school for these occasions. Parents should be notified when a child has a toileting accident. Families should also sign a form giving staff permission to help the child with the change of clothes, if necessary. The form can simply state “I understand that my child may need assistance changing clothes and I give my permission for the staff to assist my child when needed”.

Tuition & Budget

Preschool programs should be self-supporting and therefore not require subsidy from the parish. Tuition for the preschool program is separate from the K-8 tuition. Tuition for the kindergarten program should be part of the regular school tuition.

The budget for the preschool program should be incorporated into the regular school budget.

◀Refer to *Fiscal Management Handbook for Catholic Schools, 2007, Archdiocese of Chicago, Office of Catholic Schools*

Financial Assistance for Families

- Scholarships (awarded at the local school level) *In extraordinary financial hardship cases, contact the Office of Catholic Schools for Emergency Financial Assistance.*
- Child Care Assistance Program (state)
The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides low-income, working families with access to quality, affordable child care that allows them to continue working and contributes to the healthy, emotional and social development of the child. Families are required to cost-share on a sliding scale based on family size, income, and number of children in care.

IL Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies www.inccrra.org	
<u>Cook County:</u> IL Action for Children (formerly Day Care Action Council of IL) 1340 S. Damen Ave. 3 rd Flr. Chicago, IL 60608 Referral: 312-823-1100 Providers: 312-823-1100 Subsidy: 312-823-1100 www.actforchildren.org	<u>Lake County:</u> YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral YWCA of Lake County 2133 Belvidere Rd. Waukegan, IL 60085 Referral: 847-662-4247 or 800-244-5376 Providers: 847-662-4247 Subsidy: 847-662-6129 www.ywcalakecounty.org

- Tax Credits (federal)
 - Earned Income Tax Credit - The federal Earned Income Tax Credit is a wage supplement for low- and moderate-income working families.
 - Child Tax Credit – A family can claim \$1,000 per child, no matter how many children they have.
 - Dependent Care Tax Credit –The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit helps families meet their child and dependent care expenses. Any kind of child care – in a center, a family day care home, in a church, or neighbor’s or relative’s house –

qualifies. However, the care must be employment-related – that is, the adults must be the child care so that they can work or look for work.

Go to www.nwlc.org/loweryourtaxes or call the IRS at (800) 829-1040 for more information.

Ratios, Grouping and Staffing

The group sizes and ratio of staff to children present at any one time shall be as follows:

Classroom	Teacher/Child Ratio	Teacher & Aide /Child Ratio	Maximum group size in one classroom
Preschool (3 & 4 year olds, mixed or age separate)	1:10	2:20	20
Kindergarten	1:20	2:30	30*

*A teacher aided by an assistant may supervise a group of up to 30 children if all the children are at least five years of age.

- Whenever children of different ages are combined, the staff/child ratio and maximum group size shall be based on the age of the youngest child in the group.
- Adult/child ratios must be maintained at all times, even when children go to other activities or “specials”. Nap time is the only exception to this rule. Children may be under the direct supervision (staff in the same room) of 50% of the qualified staff during nap times provided the required staff/child ratio is maintained on the premises.

Group sizes are stated as ceilings, regardless of the size of the room or number of staff. A group of 20 with 2 adults is not the same psychological environment for children as a group of 40 with 4 adults even though each situation has a staff/child ratio of 1:10.

Napping and Resting

When a child’s attendance requires the provision of sleep or rest time, the school shall provide a separate cot or mat and individual bedding* for each child.

- Children under six years of age who are not enrolled in kindergarten who remain five or more hours shall have the opportunity to rest or nap
- Children three years of age and older (until they are enrolled in kindergarten) shall not nap for more than two hours or rest without sleeping for more than 60 minutes. Children in this age group who do not sleep may be permitted to get up and shall be helped to have a quiet time with equipment or activities which will not disturb the napping children. When children are allowed to get up, the staff to child ratio shall be in compliance with the requirements previously stated.
- Kindergarten children shall not be required to sleep or nap. However, floor pillows, sofa, carpet, bean bag chairs, padded chairs or cots shall be provided for lounging or resting.
- Each cot or mat should be labeled with the name of the child and used exclusively by that child. At no time shall two children be allowed to share the same cot or mat. Each cot or mat shall be thoroughly cleaned and then sanitized with a germicidal solution prior to use by another child.
- Cots or mats shall be wiped clean as often as necessary and cleaned once per week with a germicidal solution.
- When children are sleeping or napping the room shall have reduced light, but shall not be dark.

- Freshly laundered sheets and blankets shall be provided and changed at least once per week or more frequently if wet or soiled.*
*Individual bedding may be provided by families. Slumber bags are an alternative to cot sheets and blankets. Items must be sent home weekly to be laundered.

Designing the Preschool or Kindergarten Program

IL School Code has set the compulsory age for school attendance at 7 years of age. A child is not required to attend preschool or kindergarten. However, if the Catholic school offers a preschool or kindergarten program, that program must operate on the same calendar and during the same hours of operation as the rest of the elementary school.

The school can configure the preschool and/or kindergarten to meet the needs of its families and the limitations of its building and budget. Three & four year olds or just four year olds can be accepted for preschool. Programs can be two, three, four or five days a week; half day or full day, or full day with half-day option. Tuition should be adjusted accordingly.

Age-separate or mixed-age classrooms

It is not a requirement that three and four year olds be taught in separate groups. To the contrary, it is best practice in early childhood settings to have mixed-age (3, 4, & 5 year olds) groups. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) criteria, IL DCFS Licensing Standards, and National Health and Safety Performance Standards (Caring for Our Children), are all based on mixed-age grouping. The staff child ratios, maximum group size and teaching staff qualifications are the same for 3's as they are for 4's. Mixed-age grouping in early childhood settings provides academic and social benefits. The range in age dictates a cooperative environment as well as the development of a community of learners. Mixed-age early childhood programs also gives the school enrollment flexibility.

Before and After Care

The school can offer extended care for preschool and/or kindergarten students. However, any extended care programs must operate on the same calendar and during the same hours of operation as the rest of the elementary school. Extended care programs must meet all of the staffing, ratio and group size requirements previously stated.

Parent-Child Programs

Any school sponsoring a "mom (dad) & tot" program for children under the age of 3 must require the parent or guardian to stay with their child at all times during the program. Programs serving children under the age of 3 who are dropped off by parents for whatever reason or length of time require licensing by the IL Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Summer Programs

An early childhood program offered during summer vacation must be separate from, and not a continuation of, the early childhood program conducted by the elementary school during the school year.

Tuition and any fees charged to parents are separate from the regular school tuition and must cover the complete cost of the summer program including the salaries paid to staff. When calculating summer program fees, consideration should include expenses for: salaries, maintenance, utilities, materials, meals, and snacks. Salaries are paid through regular payroll procedures and must include the appropriate deductions for federal and state taxes. The

amount of salary is determined locally by the principal and is in addition to the salary paid to the teachers/staff during the regular school year.

All staff teaching and/or supervising the summer program must meet the same qualifications as required by the policies of the Office of Catholic Schools and Archdiocese of Chicago.

The standards and criteria required of the elementary school's early childhood program are also required of any summer early childhood programs.

Early childhood summer program sessions are under the direct supervision of the principal who may delegate the everyday responsibilities of the operation of the summer program to a professional educator. School and archdiocesan policies and procedures apply to the early childhood summer program.

Physical Environment

Location of Preschool or Kindergarten Classrooms

"Rooms normally occupied by preschool, kindergarten, or first-grade pupils shall not be located above or below the story of exit discharge." Section 11-2 Means of Egress, NFPA-101 Life Safety Code, National Fire Protection Association.

Indoor Space Requirements

There shall be a minimum of 35 square feet of activity area per child. This space is exclusive of exit passages and fire escapes, which must be clear. This space is also exclusive of administrative space, storage areas, bathrooms, kitchen space required for equipment that is not used for direct activities with children and gymnasiums or other areas used exclusively for large muscle activity or active sports.

Storage space shall be provided for cots, bedding, and other equipment.

One room, no matter how large, shall accommodate only one group, except that room dividers or program equipment at least 3'6" in height may be used to define and separate the space for each group of children up to age five. Gymnasiums and similar sized areas may accommodate two groups, without dividers, when used for large muscle activity and active sports.

◀Refer to *IL Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers, Section 407.370 for requirements on the Physical Plant/Indoor Space.*

Bathrooms and Toilets

Preschool or kindergarten programs are not required to have bathrooms in the classroom. IL DCFS licensing standards (Section 407.340) state "Toilets and lavatories shall be readily accessible to the children. If toilets are not located near the children's activity areas, an adult shall accompany children four years of age or younger." NAEYC criteria recommend that toilets, drinking water, and hand washing facilities be within 40 feet of the indoor areas that children use.

Preschool children must be supervised at all times when using bathrooms. Kindergarten children are allowed to use the bathroom independently (if it is in a safe environment) out of the teacher's sight and sound supervision for a short period of time.

Must schools install small toilets for preschool children?

Child sized toilets and sinks are only required for “new construction and any remodeling or renovation that alters, renovates or replaces existing plumbing or plumbing systems.” (IL Plumbing Code) “If toilets and lavatories are not child-sized, non-absorbent safe steps shall be provided.” (IL DCFS licensing standards, Section 407.340) The use of a step is acceptable provided it is safe, secure and designed for this type of use.

Lavatories (hand washing sinks) and toilet facilities shall be provide in the ratios specified below:

Number of Children	Number of Toilets	Number of Sinks
1 to 10	1	1
11-25	2	2
26-50	3	3
51-75	4	4
76-100	5	5
101 to 125	6	6
126-150	7	7
151-175	8	8
Per every 25 more children	1 more	1 more

Hot and cold running water shall be provided. Hot water supplied to plumbing fixtures used by children shall be thermostatically controlled to less than 115° F.

Mild liquid soap and single-use towels or automatic dryers shall be provided. Towels may be disposable.

Children and staff shall wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

Outdoor Play Area

The outdoor play area shall be a minimum of 75 square feet of safe outdoor area per child for the total number of children using the areas at any one time.

All play space shall be fenced or otherwise enclosed or protected from traffic and other hazards.

Play space shall be in a well-drained area.

The outdoor play area shall be arranged so that all areas are visible to staff at all times.

If play equipment is provided, it shall be maintained in good repair and in a safe, clean and sanitary manner. Protective surfaces shall be provided in areas where climbing, sliding, swinging or other equipment from which a child might fall is located.

The play area and equipment shall be inspected daily before children go out to play to ensure there are not hazards present.

If an area not connected to the school is used for play or recreation, the children shall be closely supervised both during play and while traveling to and from the area.

If the school cannot provide suitable, safe outdoor space, then the school should have an indoor activity room that provides 75 square feet per child for at least 25% of the enrollment of the program and is used for gross motor play in lieu of outdoor space.

◀Refer to *IL Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers, Section 407.390 for requirements on the Outdoor Play Area.*

Equipment and Materials

Equipment and materials for both indoor and outdoor use shall be appropriate to the age and developmental needs of the children served.

Such equipment and materials shall be provided in the quantity and variety specified in the “Minimum Equipment & Supplies Checklist” for preschool and kindergarten (found in the Creating the Learning Environment section of this Handbook).

Play materials shall be durable and free from hazardous characteristics, including sharp or rough edges and toxic paint.

Durable, safe and appropriately sized furnishings and equipment shall be provided:

- Chairs of appropriate size for each age group served.
- Tables of height and size to accommodate comfortably a group of ten or fewer children.
- Low, open shelves for play materials and books within easy reach of the children.
- Individual lockers, cubicles or separate hooks and shelves for children’s belongings.

Storage shall be provided for surplus toys and supplies not currently in use.

Equipment, table tops, play materials and classroom surfaces shall be maintained in sound, clean conditions at all times.

Water tables and toys used in water tables shall be emptied daily and cleaned with a mild germicidal solution before being air-dried. Children and staff shall wash their hands before using the water table.

Extension cords meeting Underwriters Laboratories or equivalent standards may be used provided that they are inaccessible to children and do not present any safety hazard.

Electrical outlets within the reach of children shall be covered.

Parent Volunteers

A high quality early childhood program “ensures that all families are included in all aspects of the program, including volunteer opportunities. These opportunities consider each family’s interests and skills and the needs of the program staff.”¹

¹ NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Volunteers whose duties require contact with children shall meet all of the Compliance Guidelines set forth by the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth’s “Safe Environment Requirements for Employees and Volunteers” www.archchicago.org

◀Refer to “Job Position-School Volunteer”; “Volunteers in Catholic Schools” in the OCS Handbook for School Administrators.

For more information and ideas on how to successfully incorporate volunteers into the school’s early childhood program, a good resource is Beyond the Bake Sale –The Essential Guide to Family–School Partnerships by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies.

Program Requirements for All Ages

- Each child shall be recognized as an individual whose gender, ability differences, personal privacy, choice of activities, cultural, ethnic, and religious background shall be respected.
- The teaching staff of the early childhood program should have a written plan for encouraging parents to visit their child's classroom to observe and participate in their children's experience. Parents shall be allowed to visit the program any time during normal school hours provided they have checked in at the school office.
- The program shall include opportunities for a child to have free choice of activities to play alone, if desired, or with one or several peers chosen by the child.
- The program shall provide a basic schedule of activities geared to the age levels and developmental needs of the children served. The daily schedule shall be posted in the classroom and shall provide:
 - 1) Regularity of such routines as eating, napping, and toileting with sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs of individual children;
 - 2) A balance of active and quiet activity;
 - 3) Daily indoor and outdoor activities in which children make use of both large and small muscles. For preschool programs in which individual children receive care for less than three hours per day, outdoor activities are recommended, but not required;
 - 4) Occasional trips and activities away from the school (frequency to be determined by the program);
 - 5) A supervised nap or rest period for children under six years of age who remain five or more hours.
- The daily program shall provide experiences, which promote the individual child's growth and well being and the development of self-help and communication skills, social competence, and positive self-identity.
- Program planning shall provide the following:
 - 1) A variety of activities that takes into consideration individual differences in interest, attention span, and physical and intellectual maturity;
 - 2) Sufficient time for activities and routines, so that the children can manage them and progress at their own developmental rate;
 - 3) Sufficient materials and equipment to avoid excessive competition and long waits;
 - 4) Program planning so that the children are not always required to move from one activity to another as a total group. Staff-initiated large group activities shall not be the predominant program option.
 - 5) Smooth transition from one activity to another to avoid long waiting periods between activities and prolonged periods during which the children must stand or sit; and
 - 6) Provision for privacy through arranging a small, quiet area that is easily accessible to the child who seeks or needs time to be alone.
- The use of visual media, such as television, films and videotapes, shall be limited to developmentally appropriate programming, and an alternative activity shall be made available. Media may be used as a special event or to achieve a specific goal, but shall not be used as a regular daily routine.
- The program shall take into account the stress and fatigue that result from constant pressures and stimulation of long hours in a group living situation.
- Activity areas, equipment, and materials shall be arranged so that staff can be easily aware of the child's presence and activity at all times.

- Equipment shall be arranged in orderly, clearly defined areas of interest, with sufficient space in each area for the children to see various activities available to them.
- Materials and equipment shall respect children's racial, cultural, ethnic, religious and gender identities, as well as age and ability.
- Each child shall have access to the full variety of age-appropriate equipment on a daily basis.
- When a specific plan is developed to meet a child's individual needs, the record shall include:
 - 1) Any assessments by teaching staff or resource personnel;
 - 2) Written program recommendations and goals for the child;
 - 3) A written plan for implementing those recommendations within the program;
 - 4) Periodic written evaluations of whether goals are being met;
 - 5) Adjustments to the program plan as indicated by the evaluations.
- Staff shall consult with parents before implementing any special procedures required to meet a child's individual needs.
- Children shall not be left unattended at any time.
- Staff assignments shall be such that children experience comfortable, ongoing relationships with adults. Every attempt shall be made to establish a primary relationship between each child and one adult.
- Children shall receive supervision appropriate to their developmental age at all times. All children in the program shall be protected from exploitation, neglect and abuse.
- There shall be a minimum of 35 square feet of activity area per child.

Enrollment & Discharge Procedures

Enrollment Procedures

The school should not use other eligibility criteria or testing (readiness, achievement or intelligent tests) to screen out children who are age eligible. Screening tools and services, such as Child Find, should be used only to identify children who have developmental delays, to determine the nature of the problem and to suggest remediation.

The school should not use eligibility criteria which screen out children with disabilities, and shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices and procedures to accommodate children with disabilities.

Prior to enrollment, the parents or guardian shall be provided information about the program and be given an opportunity to observe during the hours of operation.

Information Provided to Parents/Guardians by the School

The school shall give parents adequate information about the program so parents can make an informed decision regarding the enrollment of their child. At the time of enrollment, the parents shall receive copy of all written policy statements.

The school shall provide written statements, preferably in a parent handbook, that include the following and which are given to parents at the time their child is enrolled in the school:

- 1) Names, business address and telephone number of those persons legally responsible for the program and of those persons having immediate responsibility for the daily conduct of the program;

- 2) Statement of services, purposes and goals;
- 3) Description of the daily program;
- 4) Tuition & fees and plan for payment, including policies regarding delinquent payments
- 5) Admission, enrollment, and discharge policies and procedures:
- 6) Hours and dates of operation
- 7) Holiday and vacation schedules
- 8) Information regarding part-time enrollment, if applicable
- 9) Arrangements for arrival and departure of children - time, location, transportation (if applicable)
- 10) Provision for emergency medical care, treatment of illness and accidents, which includes (see OCS Handbook for School Administrators):
 - o A plan to obtain prompt services of physician and hospitalization, if needed or a plan from the parent to access the services of a certified practitioner for a child exempt from medical care on religious grounds;
 - o A plan for immediately notifying the parent or guardian of any illness, accident or injury to the child.
- 11) Medication Procedures (see OCS Handbook for School Administrators) which should include the following forms:
 - o Medical and Emergency Notification Information Authorization for Medical Treatment
 - o Medication Authorization Form
 - o School Medication Procedures
- 12) Visits, trips, or excursions off the premises and the transportation used for these visits, trips, or excursions;
- 13) Procedures concerning personal belongings brought to the center;
- 14) Policy regarding release of personal information on the child or family;
- 15) Guidance and discipline policy;
- 16) Planned means of communication between the school and the parent(s).
- 17) Statement of nondiscrimination
- 18) Policies and procedures regarding the reporting of child abuse/neglect as required by the Illinois Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act

Parents shall be informed of and agree to any variations in regular procedures undertaken to meet the specific needs of their child.

Information Provided to the School by Parents/Guardians

The school shall maintain a record on all children enrolled in the early childhood program to help staff plan effectively to meet each child's individual needs.

A written enrollment application shall be on file for each child with the signatures of the enrolling parents. The application shall contain the following information:

- 1) Child's full name, date of birth (copy of birth certificate) and gender
- 2) Name, home address and telephone number of parents.
- 3) Work hours of parents and name, address and telephone number of place of employment.
- 4) Name, address and telephone number of the child's physician
- 5) Name, address and telephone number of all persons authorized to pick up the child, which includes both:
 - o A primary list of persons authorized to pick up the child regularly; and
 - o A contingency list of persons authorized to pick up the child occasionally, including conditions for releasing the child to such persons.

- 6) Information regarding the child's individual development, habits, medical needs and other factors critical to the child's well-being and ability to participate in the program
- 7) All medical forms* required by State of IL regulations:
 - o Health Examination and Proof of Immunization
 - o Dental Examination (kindergarten children)
 - o Vision Examination
 - o School Medication Procedures, Medication Authorization and Medical & Emergency Notification Information
- 8) Professional evaluations necessary for admission of a child with special needs to determine how best to meet the needs of the child
- 9) Signed consent forms from parents, guardian or persons designated by the parents in writing, to include:
 - o Visits, trips or excursions off the premises, including transportation arrangements, when appropriate.
 - o Health care and treatment, including emergency first-aid (*Medical and Emergency Notification Information Form*)
 - o Child's involvement in research, if applicable.
 - o Use of photographs, film or video of children.
 - o School attendance away from the center, if applicable, including the time the child shall be released and the means of transportation the child shall use.
 - o Participation in athletic activities, if applicable.
 - o Use of facility or public school district transportation, if applicable.

*see "Health Requirements" OCS [Handbook for School Administrators](#)

Discharge Procedures

Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates inability to benefit from the type of education and care offered by the early childhood program, or whose presence is detrimental to themselves or the group, can be discharged from the school. In all instances, if the school administration and family decides that it is in the best interest of the child to terminate enrollment, the child's and family's needs shall be considered by planning with the parents to meet the child's needs when he or she leaves the school, including referrals to other agencies or facilities.

As Catholic schools, we strive to be inclusive of and meet the needs of all children and families. However, there will be cases where, given the limitations of the school's resources or physical environment, that is not possible. To prepare for these instances, the school and/or early childhood handbook should describe the steps that will be taken to support and assist children and their families with the transition to another educational program.

Refer to the "SPECIAL NEEDS" section of this handbook for steps to be taken to address a child's atypical behavior or social/emotional development.

◀Also, refer to "Inclusive Education" in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#) and to the [Handbook for Inclusive Education, Teaching Students with Differing Learning Needs](#) on the OCS Portal at <http://ocs.archchicago.org/> in the Academic Excellence section.

Daily Arrival and Departure

Arrival

The daily arrival of children at the program shall be conducted in a way that protects each child's physical and emotional well-being. Information provided by parents about a child's immediate daily needs shall be communicated in a timely manner to teaching staff responsible for the child.

Teaching staff should conduct a daily health check to determine if a child has obvious symptoms of illness (see Health & Safety section). If symptoms of illness are present, the child's inclusion or exclusion for the day shall be determined by the staff and whether the school is able to care for the child safely, based on the apparent degree of illness, other children present and facilities available to care for the ill child.

Children shall not remain on the premises of the school for more than 12 hours in any 24 hour period.

A daily attendance record shall be maintained in such a way that it is always possible to determine the number of children present at any given time.

Departure

The daily departure of the children shall be conducted in a way that protects each child's physical and emotional well-being.

- 1) The staff shall refuse to release a child to any person, whether related or unrelated to the child, who has not been authorized by the parent or parents to receive the child. Persons not known to the staff shall be required to provide a driver's license (with photo), a photo identification card issued by the Illinois Secretary of State or other photo identification to establish their identity before the child is released to them.
- 2) When a child is released to a person authorized on the contingency list, the school shall maintain a record of the person's name and the date and time.
- 3) If a child is to be released before the end of the regularly scheduled program, the time of the child's departure from the school shall be noted on a daily departure log and initialed, signed or otherwise documented by the person to whom the child is released.

Sign In/Sign Out Procedures

Parent/guardian daily sign in and sign out of children is not a requirement except by IL DCFS Licensing Standards. However, schools should make provisions for the safe arrival and departure of all children and allow, if possible, for interaction among teaching staff and families. A system should exist for ensuring that children are released only to authorized people, as well as a system to ensure the safety of children whose parents have agreed to allow their older school-age children to take their younger siblings home. A procedure for accountability when a child fails to show for the program should also be in place and followed. All of these systems should be written as procedures and included in the school handbook and early childhood parent handbook, if applicable.

Criteria and Standards for High Quality

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria

NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children-the world's largest organization of early childhood educators-established its accreditation system in 1985 to raise the quality of early childhood education and help families and others identify high-quality child care centers, preschools, kindergartens, and other early childhood programs. NAEYC's National Academy of Early Childhood Program Accreditation administers the national, voluntary, professionally sponsored accreditation system. Accreditation Criteria provide a framework for planning a high-quality program.

For more information about the accreditation process or to order self-study materials, visit the NAEYC web site at <http://www.naeyc.org>; or call the Academy at 800-424-2460 or call 202-232-8777; or write NAEYC Academy, 1509 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20036-1426; or e-mail academy@naeyc.org

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards

Another excellent resource for program standards is Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, which lists over 600 health and safety practices. Key standards appear in the briefer "Stepping Stones to Using Caring for Our Children." Both resources can be accessed online from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care at www.nrc.uchsc.edu

IL DCFS Licensing Standards

The primary purpose of licensing standards is the protection of children. Minimum requirements are designed to maintain adequate health, safety, and supervision of children while in a group care setting. Licensure rules were developed, in most part, by state health departments to meet the basic needs of children in out-of-home custodial care.

In Illinois, the Department of Children and Family Services, DCFS, is responsible for setting standards and licensing day care centers, homes, group homes and day care agencies in the state.

Licensing standards can be accessed on-line at www.state.il.us/dcfs. Go to:

- DCFS links-Day Care and Early Childhood Links
- DCFS Rules (including licensing rules)
- Part 407-Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers

To get a copy mailed, call:
State of IL Dept. of Children & Family Services
406 E. Monroe St.
Springfield, IL 62701-1498
217-524-1983

Why are Licensing Standards Important?

Even though our early childhood programs are exempt from licensing requirements, the

standards provide a foundation for quality and are a good source of information for our schools. We have many young children that spend long hours in our schools, attending before-school care, a full day preschool or kindergarten program and then after-school care. This can be as much as 8-10 hours a day. We need to acknowledge that we are caring for children as well as educating them. We should voluntarily comply with the licensing standards as much as possible.

The statements providing our exemption from licensure can be found on the DCFS web site. Follow the same links as above. Go to

- Part 377, Section 3a – Day Programs Exempt from Licensure

Remember, just because Catholic schools are exempt from licensing standards does not mean that we are not liable. Our early childhood programs must make every effort to meet minimum standards of quality and care.

License Exempt Status

The following is a statement prepared by the Office of Catholic Schools and approved by a Senior Counsel of the Legal Department of the Archdiocese of Chicago:

The early childhood programs of the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago serve children who are 3 and/or 4 years of age on or before September 1 of the current school year. These programs are license-exempt as defined in "Facilities and Programs Exempt from Licensure", IL DCFS Licensing Standards Part 377, Section 377.3

The Archdiocese of Chicago operates the Catholic elementary schools, which include preschool and kindergarten programs, as a private elementary school system that provides religious education as part of the instructional program. These schools are regulated by the Office of Catholic Schools and recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The early childhood program at (School Name) is a part of the elementary school and under its administration. (School Name) holds a Certificate of Recognition by the Illinois State Board of Education (certificate attached).

ADMINISTRATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

The Role of the Principal²

There are numerous roles that a principal can assume to promote quality early childhood education programs in an elementary school. These roles can be adapted to meet the unique demands of an individual school. However, the following are some responsibilities for early education that belong uniquely to the principal of the Catholic elementary school.

Ensuring that teachers understand young children and child development: Knowledge of child development is a critical element in early childhood education. Teachers of young children need to have a broad perspective and understanding about how young children learn. NAEYC laid the foundation for teacher preparation more than a decade ago, when they promulgated their position on developmentally appropriate practice. In their landmark publication, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8*, editor Sue Bredekamp defined exactly what early childhood education is.

“An early childhood program is any part-day or full-day group program in a center, school, or other facility that serves children from birth through age 8. Early childhood programs include child care centers, private and public preschools, kindergartens, and primary grade schools.”

Providing an environment rich in developmentally appropriate practice: The learning “environment” is important at all levels of learning, but it is of particular concern when teaching young children because the environment helps to define the curriculum. Young children learn by interacting with materials, adults, and other children. Therefore an environment rich in developmentally appropriate practice includes a variety of materials with which children can interact and adults who have training in early childhood education and can implement a rich and interactive curriculum.

Supplying adequate materials and resources for early childhood classrooms and learning spaces: A high quality early childhood program provides appropriate materials and resources for preschool and kindergarten learning spaces. These materials and resources — not just books — must be available for all children in preschool and kindergarten. Age appropriate tables and chairs, math manipulatives, dramatic play equipment, hands on science materials, quality books, art and writing materials, and blocks are necessary to provide an environment that challenges children’s learning and development. Budgeting for materials and

Our children need an environment sweetened with tender loving care, encouragement, inspiration, role models, and time – time to play, pretend, explore, experiment, and wonder; time to develop at their own pace and in their own special rhythms. When children learn in such safe, supportive settings under the gentle, constant guidance of loving adults, they prove over and over again that they are among the most creative members of this gifted and talented human family of ours.

-Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld

² Adapted from *Good Practices for Young Children: A Guide for Early Childhood Educators* by Gloria Castucci and Antoinette Dudek, OSF.

resources is the primary responsibility of the principal with the assistance of preschool and kindergarten teachers.

Protecting the rights of children: The principal is responsible for protecting and defending the rights of the children. Principals must be informed of policies and procedures that ensure the safety of children. He or she must be familiar with the procedures for reporting child abuse and is obligated to provide training for teachers in this area. The principal is also responsible for ensuring that school staff is aware of the adults to whom children may be released and any legal considerations that may impact the welfare of individual children. Finally the principal must ensure that the school is a place where children feel secure in the knowledge that they are safe from verbal injury and physical harm.

Preserving the Catholic identity of the total early childhood program in the elementary school: The principal should ensure that the total early childhood education program promotes the Catholic philosophy of the school and that the OCS Religion Curriculum is followed. All children must be respected as children of God and regarded as unique individuals. The school setting conveys a sense of God-likeness through its faculty and staff. Prayers are a natural part of the day and children participate in prayer services appropriate to their age level. Preschool and kindergarten children can participate in brief Eucharistic liturgy by learning songs, and prayers.

Supporting professional enrichment opportunities for early childhood teachers: While it is true that early childhood programs have different needs than other grades, it is also very important that teachers of very young children are included in faculty and staff meetings if they are to properly carry out the Catholic aspects of their respective programs.

In budgeting for the school year, it is important to set aside time and money for teachers at all levels, including preschool and kindergarten, to participate in significant enrichment opportunities. For some, the ability to observe at another school may be a possibility. For others, the ability to participate in a regional conference on early childhood education will provide them an enriching experience. Teachers, like administrators, need opportunities for professional enrichment at their appropriate levels. Ideally, such opportunities are available quarterly; at a minimum, at least two meaningful in-service opportunities should be provided each year.

Facilitating inclusive faculty and staff meetings: It is important for the entire faculty and staff to meet together as a group on a regular basis to ensure that everyone feels that he or she is part of the school. During these meetings staff can be informed of upcoming events, new policies and procedures, as well as ways to uphold the philosophy and mission of the school. Teachers can also meet separately in smaller groups comprised of those working with similar age groups such as early childhood, primary, middle and upper grades. The faculty and staff can decide which configurations work best for their particular school. The purpose of these meetings is to share best practices among teachers and to initiate conversations in excellence. Teachers who meet regularly can share their gifts and talents with one another and gain insights and knowledge from their colleagues. Teachers will rise to their professional best through growth-filled experiences.

Maintaining an environment rich in educational excellence: The role of the principal is to ensure that every classroom and learning space is a meaningful environment for optimal learning. Such environments are creative not chaotic; flexible not rigid or fixed; life-giving not lifeless; and active not passive. Educational excellence means that all children are learning to

the best of their abilities. Multi modalities are used for instruction and for voicing questions and concerns. Accommodations for children with special learning or physical needs are made when needed. The optimum potential of all young learners is celebrated.

“There is no formula for Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Teachers make decisions day by day, minute by minute, based on knowledge of how children develop and learn, the individual children and families in question, and the social and cultural context.”³

Administrator Resources

Getting It Right from the Start: The Principal's Guide to Early Childhood Education by Marjorie J. Kostelnik and Marilyn L. Grady

Leading Early Childhood Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do, National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)

The What, Why, and How of High Quality Early Childhood Education: A Guide for On-Site Supervision by Derry G. Koralek, Laura J. Colker, and Diane Trister Dodge

Personnel Qualifications

Refer to the Office of Catholic Schools Handbook for School Administrators for the following policies regarding these positions:

- **Teacher** – “Job Position-Teacher”; “Teacher Qualifications”; “Hiring Process-Teacher”; “Job Offer”
- **Aide** – “Job Position-School Aide”
- **Substitute** – “Substitute Teacher”
- **Volunteer** – “Job Position-School Volunteer”; “Volunteers in Catholic Schools”;

Personnel filling any of these positions are required to comply with the “Safe Environment Requirements for Employees and Volunteers”.

◀Refer to the OCS Handbook for School Administrators, as well as Protecting God’s Children at <http://www.archchicago.org/ProtectingChildren.htm>

A personnel file should be maintained for all administrators, teachers, and teacher aides. These files should be updated periodically as necessary.

◀Refer to “Personnel File for School Employees” in the Office of Catholic Schools Handbook for School Administrators for the list of documents required to be in the personnel file.

Professional Development

What is a “professional”?

One of the major functions of a professional organization (ex. NAEYC) is to set standards of performance based on the best available advanced knowledge and practices. Practicing professionals are committed to performing at the same high standards consistently, without allowing personal matters or moods to affect their work or their relations with those and for whom they work. Nonprofessionals may be very skillful, may enjoy their work, and often work very effectively as volunteers. Dr. Lilian Katz, Professor Emerita of Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign states, “A major difference between professionals and nonprofessionals lies in the commitment to maintain professional standards.”

³ Bredekamp, Sue, and Copple, Carol, eds. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice In Early Childhood Programs, Revised Edition*. Washington DC: NAEYC, 1997.

The Responsibility of the Program for Ongoing Professional Development

"The program provides regular opportunities for staff to participate in ongoing professional development to improve skills in working with children and families or to prepare them to assume more responsible positions. Ongoing professional development provides continuing education and other opportunities for staff to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field, including new programs and practices and pending policy, legislation, or regulatory changes. The amount and kind of continuing education provided would vary depending on the needs of the program, the pre-service qualifications of staff, and the number of staff pursuing higher education while employed. Professional development experiences should be credit bearing whenever possible."⁴

◀Refer to "Professional Growth" in the Office of Catholic Schools Handbook for School Administrators.

The Responsibility of the Teacher for Ongoing Professional Development

"Because new knowledge is always emerging about how best to provide high-quality early childhood education, and because new opportunities and new roles emerge in the field for individuals with professional preparation, it is a professional responsibility to view learning as lifelong and to continue professional growth every year. Even programs with highly qualified staff members need to provide regular opportunities for ongoing professional development to ensure that staff members obtain current knowledge and new ideas. Provision can take the form of on-site activities such as workshops or classes and a resource library. Off-site activities such as time to visit other programs or attend classes should also be provided. The topic of professional development will vary depending on the needs of the program and should be based on evaluation of staff members' performance."¹

Ways Teachers Pursue Ongoing Professional Development:

- Workshops
- Conferences
- Membership in professional organizations
- Subscriptions to professional publications
- Presentations at conferences/workshops/meetings
- Awards (Kohl/McCormick Early Childhood Teaching Award, Golden Apple)
- Enrollment in college for certification or advanced degree

Being an advocate for the children in your program is part of professional development. Here are some suggestions:

- Have a knowledge of child development and of individual children's needs and abilities
- Work collaboratively with other faculty in your school
- Educate others about the needs of young children. Speak up!
- Be aware of laws affecting young children. Get involved!
- Invite support from the local community. Ask for help!
- Celebrate the "Week of the Young Child" annually. Go to www.naeyc.org for information.

⁴ Refer to NAEYC's *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment*, which gives guidelines for responsible behavior in early childhood education.

Staff Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is a determining factor in professionalism. Good self-reflection looks for ways to change the environment, schedule, curriculum, interactions, attitudes and actions of the teacher and aide to create a more appropriate program for children. Does it meet the criteria for a high quality program? Are the children relaxed and happy? Are the parents satisfied with the program? Are the parents and the principal educated about what a developmentally appropriate program should look like? A good program allows parents to feel that they are valued partners in the process. If your program is not functioning, as you know it should, how can you change it? What role does the administrator need to play to make this change happen? Has the program become stale? Are you continually seeking new ideas and ways to improve the program? Each day, teachers and aides can ask themselves the following questions as they reflect on their classroom.

- Did you enjoy teaching today?
- Did the children enjoy learning today?
- Did the children have “I can” opportunities?
- How did transitions go? Were they smooth or difficult?
- How did the room sound throughout the day?
- Did you notice something about each child?
- Did you note change/development of at least five children?
- Did you sit with the children at snack/lunch?
- Did you engage in conversations about real life with children?
- How many times did you say “no” or “don’t do that” today?
- How many times did you raise your voice today?
- Is the room fairly clean and organized?
- If there were problems, what happened and what can you do to change this next time?

*You’ve got to do
your own
growing, no
matter how tall
your grandfather
was.*

--Irish Proverb

Accountability

Assessment of Staff

The administrator or other appropriate supervisor evaluates all staff, including the aides, at least annually. Results of evaluation are written, confidential and discussed. The evaluation includes classroom observation. Staff is informed of evaluation criteria in advance. Evaluation is based on a job description and previously established goals for improvement. Staff has an opportunity to evaluate their own performance. A plan for staff training is generated from the evaluation process.

“Evaluation of staff member’s performance and appropriate feedback is important to maintain good quality education & care for children and staff moral. Such evaluation should be used for planning professional development opportunities.”

◀Refer to the OCS Performance Review and Evaluation of School Staff for procedures and forms. Also refer to “Performance Review” in the OCS Handbook for School Administrators

Assessment of the Program

At least annually, administrators, families, staff, school-age children, and other routinely participating adults are involved in evaluating the program’s effectiveness in meeting the needs of children and families. The program regularly establishes goals for continuous improvement and innovation.

“All high quality organizations regularly explore new approaches and seek to continually improve and innovate.” (NAEYC)

Spring is a good time of the year - parents are familiar with your program - to send home a survey or questionnaire to evaluate how well your early childhood program is meeting the needs of children and families. This should be done on an annual basis. Feedback can then be used to identify areas in need of improvement and to plan the program's goals and objectives for the next school year. Don't forget to update and/or make changes to your Early Childhood Parent Handbook after reviewing the feedback from the surveys or questionnaires.

◀Refer to the OCS [School Improvement Process: Genesis Handbook 2009](#)

Program Evaluations and Self-Assessments

Accreditation

Accreditation is a voluntary process designed to improve the quality of early care and education programs. Accreditation systems require early care and education programs to meet standards that exceed minimum State regulatory requirements (licensing standards). Achieving accreditation involves extensive self-study and validation by professionals outside the program to verify that quality standards are met. Fees vary for each stage of the process and are determined by the accrediting organization.

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) www.naeyc.org
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation <http://www.necpa.net/> 1-800-505-9878
- National Accreditation Commission (NAC) National Association of Child Care Professionals (NACCP) www.nacpp.org 1-800-537-1118

For a more extensive list of national accreditation systems for early care and education programs, go to the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center www.nccic.org

Quality Rating System

As stated above, accreditation systems require early care and education programs to meet standards that exceed State regulatory requirements. However, the steps between State licensing and achieving national accreditation are often significant. Several States have developed a statewide quality rating system (QRS) as a method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings.

In Illinois, the QRS is funded by the IL Dept. of Human Services and the application process is administered by the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA).

Self Assessments

A self-assessment of the program can be done for the cost of the book and an investment of time by staff that is committed to improving the program. Training, if desired, in the use of the first three tools is provided by the university or organization listed.

- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) - Harms, Clifford & Cryer www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers Teachers College Press <http://tcpres.org> 1-800-575-6566
- Program Administration Scale (PAS) Talan & Bloom, National Louis University Center for Early Childhood Leadership <http://cecl.nl.edu/evaluation/pas.htm>
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) By Robert C. Pianta, Ph.D., Karen M. La Paro, Ph.D., and Bridget K. Hamre, Ph.D. <http://www.brookespublishing.com/store/books/pianta-class/index.htm>

- National Study of School Evaluation – AdvanceEd Early Childhood School Improvement Guide 1-800-843-6773 www.nsse.org
- Preschool Teaching Practices, Blueprint for Action by P.J. Bloom, Redleaf Press www.readleafpress.org or Gryphon House www.gryphonhouse.com
- Readiness for Learning-A Readiness Audit Tool for Kindergarten Classrooms <http://www.eric.ed.gov>
- Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms (APEEC) Hemmeter, Maxwell, Ault & Schuster <http://store.tcpres.com> 1-800-843-6773

10 Signs of a Great Preschool⁵

To informally assess your program, look for these signs of a high quality classroom.

1. Children spend most of their time playing and working with material or other children. They do not wander aimlessly, and they are not expected to sit quietly for long periods of time.
2. Children have access to various activities throughout the day. Look for assorted building blocks and other construction material, props for pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as matching games, pegboards and puzzles. Children should not all be doing the same thing at the same time.
3. Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They do not spend all their time with the whole group.
4. The classroom is decorated with children's original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and stories dictated by children to teachers.
5. Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. The natural world of plants and animals and meaningful activities like cooking, taking attendance, or serving snack provide the basis for learning activities.
6. Children work on projects and have long periods of time (at least one hour) to play and explore. Worksheets are used little if at all.
7. Children have an opportunity to play outside every day. Outdoor play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.
8. Teachers read books to children individually or in small groups throughout the day, not just at group time.
9. Curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Teachers recognize that children's different background and experiences mean that they do not all learn the same things at the same time in the same way.
10. Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel secure about sending their child to the program. Children are happy to attend; they do not cry regularly or complain of feeling sick.

⁵ National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org

HEALTH, SAFETY & NUTRITION

Creating a Safe and Healthy Environment

It is essential to provide a safe and healthy environment for young children. Excellent curriculum and high quality adult-child interactions cannot compensate for an environment that is dangerous for children. Quality early childhood programs work to prevent illness and accidents, are prepared to deal with emergencies that may occur, and educate children regarding safe and healthy practices. Regardless of the challenges that some older buildings present, providing a safe and healthy environment for the children is a top priority

Role of the Principal

As the administrator of the school, the principal has the responsibility for maintaining a healthy and safe environment for children and adults associated with the early childhood program. It is the principal that creates and administers policies and procedures and ensures that they are followed. Staff and parents look to the principal to create the safe and healthy environment that all children deserve.

What are ways that the principal can support a safe and healthy environment?

- Be knowledgeable of basic health and safety practices for early childhood programs
- Make available the written policies and procedures for the health and safety of the children and staff regarding health records, immunizations, illnesses, accidents and incidents. This includes building safety & security, emergency plans, evacuation routes, emergency contact information, and the administration of medication
- Provide orientation and in-service training to staff and volunteers regarding the health and safety policies and procedures. These should include the child abuse/neglect and mandated report policies, crisis emergency plan, accident & illness, medication procedures.
- Monitor the cleanliness and sanitation of the facility
- Monitor the health of staff, volunteers, and children
- Ensure that legal age guidelines are followed when enrolling children to ensure the safety of everyone in the program.
- Ensure adequate supervision of students during the school day and while on school premises
- Maintain building security. Refer to “Safety Standards” and “Security in the School Building” in the OCS Handbook for School Administrators
- Obtain the required health information for each child upon enrollment, before the first day of school (refer to “Health Requirements” in the OCS Handbook for School Administrators) :
 - Health Examination and Proof of Immunization
 - Dental Examination (kindergarten children)
 - Vision Examination
 - School Medication Procedures, Medication Authorization and Medical & Emergency Notification Information
- Ensure that all health and safety records are maintained and kept up to date
- Obtain the required health information on staff. Refer to “Personnel File” in the OCS Handbook for School Administrators)

Role of the Staff

As the adults who work directly with children and have the responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of the program, the teaching staff is critical to ensuring a safe and healthy environment.

What should the teaching staff do to maintain a safe and healthy environment?

- Be familiar with necessary health and safety practices for early childhood programs
- Have a “Freedom from Communicable Disease Report” (and a TB test every two years if NAEYC accredited) on file at school
- Maintain a clean and safe environment
- Do a daily health check on each child
- Do frequent safety checks on all equipment and toys. Report any service(s) needed to the principal. Remove broken, splintered, or otherwise unsafe items
- Have copies of the “**Medical & Emergency Notification Information Authorization for Medical Treatment**” form for each child in the classroom and available on field trips
- Clean and sanitize toys (see Cleaning and Sanitizing Chart)
- Wash and then sanitize tables with bleach solution before and after snacks and meals
- Be familiar with accident and illness procedures, incident report forms and the school’s crisis emergency plan
- Understand the role of a mandated reporter of child abuse and neglect
- Maintain accurate student attendance records
- Include topics related to health and safety in the curriculum
- Maintain regular communication with families regarding health and safety practices and procedures in the classroom as well as any observations or concerns about individual children
- *Recommended* - CPR and First Aid certification

Children’s Records

Up-to-date and accurate health, attendance, and academic progress records are required for every preschool and kindergarten child enrolled in the school, whether they are a part time or full time student. These records provide the necessary information for the school to meet local and state regulations and ensure that children stay safe and healthy while in the school environment. These records also protect the school from liabilities.

A list of the required Health, Dental and Vision examinations and Proof of Immunizations as well as the policies regarding medical and religious objections can be found in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#) under “Health Requirements”.

Also refer to “School Records” in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#)

Child Abuse and Mandated Reporting

What does it mean to be a mandated reporter?

The Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, 1975, mandates that seven categories of professionals immediately report suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) when they have reason to believe that a child they have come to know through their official role or capacity may be the victim of abuse or neglect. School personnel are one of the categories. Child Care personnel are as well.

What is the responsibility of a mandated reporter?

As mandated reporters, all school personnel including administrators and both certified and non-certified staff must contact the DCFS when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child who is seventeen years of age or younger and known to them in their professional capacity has been harmed or is in danger of being harmed - physically, sexually, or through neglect - and that a care giver either committed the harm or should have taken steps to protect the child from harm. The call must be made immediately and no one in the workplace is permitted to restrain the call. The mandated reporter is obligated to make the report to DCFS and may not relinquish that responsibility to the administrator or school nurse.

Mandated reporters need not have proof or convincing evidence of the abuse; merely suspicion of abuse makes a call to DCFS necessary. Furthermore, Illinois law protects mandated reporters from litigation if the DCFS call was made in good faith.

All school personnel must sign an acknowledgement of mandated reporter status prior to employment, the Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking form (CANTS) 22 as well as CANTS form 689. Further information can be found on the IL DCFS web site www.state.il.us/dcf. Refer to "Child Abuse Reporting Procedures" and "Mandated Reporters" in the OCS Handbook for School Administrators

What is considered child abuse?

DCFS investigates physical abuse (such as cuts, welts and bruises), sexual abuse (such as inappropriate touching) and neglect (such as inadequate supervision).

In what situations of alleged abuse might school personnel find themselves?

Detailed procedures for the following three types of situations where allegations may be made can be found in the OCS Handbook for School Administrators under "Child Abuse Reporting Procedures":

1. An allegation is made against an Archdiocesan employee, volunteer or cleric.
2. An allegation is made against someone responsible for the child's welfare.
3. An allegation is made against someone who is not responsible for the child's welfare.

Archdiocesan Policy regarding Child Abuse and Neglect can be found in its most updated form on the website of the Archdiocese of Chicago, www.archchicago.org. You will find them in "About the Archdiocese" for "Policy Books". The direct link to the Policy Books is <http://policy.archchicago.org>

How do you report child abuse?

Child abuse and neglect reports are made by calling the DCFS Hotline in Illinois at 1-800-252-2873 or 1-800-25ABUSE; outside of Illinois, call 1-217-524-2606 and TTY at 1-800-358-5117. Further information can be found on the DCFS web site www.state.il.us/dcf

Prevention of Illness and Injury

Although illness and injuries occur, it is possible to reduce the risk of these for children and staff. For that reason, it is important to develop procedures for dealing with illnesses and injuries and take extra precautions in preventing any unnecessary consequences of exposure to infections.

What should be done to reduce the risk of infections?

It is important to keep the classroom and equipment clean and sanitized, do a daily health check on each child, practice good hand-washing techniques, educate the staff and families about infectious diseases and techniques to prevent their spread, and require all immunizations be up to date. Children with infectious, contagious, and communicable disease must be isolated from the group and sent home. Parents must notify the principal if their child has a communicable disease so that a letter can be sent home informing school families to be aware of symptoms. Refer to “Communicable Diseases” in the OCS [Handbook for School Administrators](#)

What is a daily health check?

It is a procedure that ascertains the child’s health, any recent illness or injury, and reduces the transmission of communicable diseases. Each day, a staff member should conduct a health check of each child as soon as possible after the child enters the classroom. This is performed in a relaxed and casual manner, through observation and interaction with the child. Teachers should communicate with parents any concerns or observations when children enter or leave the classroom or by phone calls and written notes. When doing a health check teachers should look for such things as:

- Changes in behavior (such as lethargy or drowsiness) or appearance. Behavior that is atypical for the time of day observed during the previous day’s attendance
- Skin rashes, itchy skin or scalp, or (during a lice outbreak) nits
- Symptoms of fever (flushed complexion, glassy eyes, complaint of being hot or having chills)
- Complaints of pain or of not feeling well
- Other signs/symptoms of illness (such as drainage from eyes, difference in breathing, severe coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.)
- Abnormal eating or napping behavior
- Reported illness or injury in child or family members since last date of attendance

Hand Washing

Hand washing is the single most important way to reduce the spread of infection. Studies have shown that unwashed or improperly washed hands are primary carriers of infections. Incorrect hand washing contributes to outbreaks of diarrhea or other illnesses in staff and children.

What are good hand washing practices?

- Check to be sure a clean, disposable paper towel is available, if hand dryers are not.
- Turn on warm water (no less than 60 degrees F and no more than 120 degrees F)
- Moisten hands with water and apply liquid soap
- Rub hands together vigorously until a soapy lather appears, and continue for at least 10 seconds. Rub areas between fingers, around nail beds, under fingernails, jewelry, and back of hands
- Rinse hands under running water until they are free of soil and dirt. Leave the water running while drying hands
- Dry hands with the clean, disposable paper
- If taps do not shut off automatically, turn taps off with a disposable paper towel. Discard towel. Using a paper towel to turn off the faucet prevents recontamination of hands.

When must hands be washed?

- Upon arrival for the day

Before and after:

- Eating, handling food, or feeding a child

- Playing in the sand and water table
- Using play dough

After:

- Using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet
- Handling bodily fluid (mucus, blood, vomit), from sneezing, wiping and blowing noses, from mouths, or from sores
- Handling pets and other animals
- Playing in sandboxes
- Cleaning or handling garbage

Can wipes or hand sanitizer be used?

Many schools have bathrooms down the hall from the classroom. It is understandable that this is inconvenient for frequent hand washing especially when children need to be accompanied by an adult. However, wipes do not effectively clean hands and should not be used as a substitute for washing hands with soap and water. Occasionally, after an art experience, before and after the use of the sand and water table, they may be used. However, they cannot be used before or after eating, using the toilet, or handling bodily fluids or pets.

“The use of alcohol-based hand rubs, or hand sanitizers, in lieu of hand washing is not recommended for early education and child care settings. If these products are used as a temporary measure, a sufficient amount must be used to keep the hands wet for 15 seconds. Since the alcohol-based hand rubs are toxic and flammable, they must be stored and used according to the manufacturer’s instructions.” NAEYC

Running water and soap are the keys to effective hand washing. Running water over the hands removes soil, including infection-causing organisms. Wetting the hands before applying soap creates lather to remove the soil. Rubbing hands together further loosens soil. Rinsing removes soil that the soap loosened.

What should be done to reduce the risk of injuries?

All programs providing education and care to young children should follow basic health and safety standards and practices, such as those in the IL DCFS Licensing Standards. Local building, sanitary and fire codes must be observed. A safe environment can be created by following these basic guidelines:

- Be alert to hazards both indoors and outdoors and eliminate or avoid them
- Look at the environment through the eyes of a young child. Get down on your hands and knees to see what a child sees. You may be surprised at what you find.
- Conduct regular safety checks of each room or space used by young children, including the outdoor play area. Some features need to be checked daily, others weekly or monthly. The “Health and Safety Checklist” from Model Child Care Health Policies in the book Healthy Young Children, A Manual for Programs provides a checklist of items most commonly associated with injury.

What should be done if a child becomes ill at school?

Every school should have a plan in place as to the procedures to be followed when a child becomes ill at school. All students must have a “Medical and Emergency Notification Information and Authorization for Medical Treatment” form (OCS Handbook for School Administrators) on file at the school. If the child’s health condition is accompanied by symptoms that prevent the child from participating in normal classroom activities, then a parent/guardian or emergency contact should be notified. The sick child should be allowed to rest, isolated from the rest of the class, but supervised by a school staff member until someone is able to pick the child up.

◀Refer to “Accidents and Illness” in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#)

When should children stay home due to illness?

Children should stay home if they are vomiting, have diarrhea, or have a fever above 100 degrees. Children must also stay home if they have an illness that is contagious or communicable that requires isolation. Children excluded from school due to a communicable disease must present a written and signed statement from a physician indicating that they are non-contagious and may return to school.

◀Refer to “Communicable Diseases” in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#)

What should be done if a child becomes injured at school?

An incident may be something minor such as a child being hit with a toy or two children bumping heads that causes bruising or discomfort for a period of time. It may also be something more serious such as a fall or an animal bite. In the event of an incident that results in a child being seriously hurt, then the parent or guardian must be notified immediately. In the case of a life-threatening injury, emergency medical services (911) should be called.

◀Refer to “Accidents & Illness” and “Incident Report” in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#)

What if a child requires medication at school?

Teachers, administrators and administrative staff shall not administer medication to students except as provided in the Office of Catholic Schools Archdiocese of Chicago School Medication Procedures.

◀Refer to “School Medication Procedures” in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#)

Sanitation

What needs to be cleaned and sanitized and how often does it need to be done?

The classroom should be kept neat, clean, and free of trash. Tables must be washed with a soap solution and sanitized before and after any food experience; other tables are cleaned daily. If a child puts a toy in their mouth it should immediately be put aside to be sanitized; other toys are cleaned on a regular basis. Garbage cans containing food waste must immediately be emptied or covered at all times. All bedding used at naptime needs to be washed weekly. If there are no laundry facilities on site, bedding should be sent home weekly to be washed. Detergent and bleach solution should be used for most surfaces. All cleaning chemicals other than the bleach solution must be kept in a locked cabinet. The bleach solution is kept out of the reach of children. Health and safety checks of the facility should be done monthly. Broken equipment, toys, and furniture must either be fixed or removed.

What is meant by the bleach solution?

The bleach solution is used to sanitize various items in the classroom. It is recommended by the Center for Disease Control for sanitizing purposes:

- Add 1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 quart of water (1/4 cup of bleach per 1 gallon of water)
- Mix a fresh solution each day to disinfect surfaces cleaned with soapy water
- Dispense from a spray bottle that is kept out of the reach of children
- Wet the entire surface until glistening, and leave solution on the surface at least 2 minutes.
- Dry with a paper towel or allow to air dry

Can I use another disinfectant instead?

Yes. Illinois has passed the Green Cleaning Schools Act which requires schools to use environmentally friendly or green-certified cleaning products. Supporters say that green-certified cleaners are less toxic and have fewer fumes that can trigger reactions like asthma and respiratory ailments in children. Disinfectants are exempt under the Illinois law, so other “greener” alternatives to bleach can be used.

Why is so much importance given to sanitation?

Young children are in contact with every surface, including floors. Consequently, all surfaces may be contaminated and can spread infectious disease agents. Illnesses are spread in a variety of ways: coughing, sneezing, and direct contact. Contaminated surfaces can remain infectious for variable periods of time. Regular cleaning of rooms and surfaces prevents the transmission of diseases.

The Cleaning and Sanitation chart that follows has been adapted from Healthy Young Children, A Manual for Programs, NAEYC (2002)

Cleaning and Sanitizing Chart			
CLASSROOM	CLEAN	SANITIZE	FREQUENCY
Countertops/tabletops, Floors, Door and cabinet handles	X	X	Daily and when soiled
Food preparation & service surfaces	X	X	Before and after contact with food activity.
Carpets and large area rugs	X		Vacuum daily when children are not present. Clean with a carpet cleaning method approved by local health authority. Clean every 3 months or when soiled.
Small rugs	X		Shake outdoors or vacuum daily. Launder weekly.
Utensils, surfaces and toys that go into the mouth or have been in contact with saliva or other body fluids.	X	X	After each child's use, or use disposable, one-time utensils or toys.
Phone receivers	X	X	Weekly
Cots	X	X	Weekly, before use by a different child, and whenever soiled or wet.
Cubbies	X		Monthly and when soiled
Sheets, blankets, bedding	X	X	Weekly
Waste containers	X		Daily
Any surface contaminated with body fluids: saliva, mucus, vomit, urine, stool, or blood	X	X	Immediately—see note below
TOILET AREA	CLEAN	SANITIZE	FREQUENCY
Hand washing sinks, faucets, surrounding counters, soap dispensers, door knobs	X	X	Daily and when soiled.
Toilet bowls	X	X	Daily
Toilet seats, handles, door knobs or cubicle handles, floors	X	X	Daily, or immediately if visibly soiled
TOYS	CLEAN	SANITIZE	FREQUENCY
Small toys that can go into the mouth	X	X	After each use.
Toys (small and large) that are not contaminated with body fluids.	X		Weekly and when visible soiled.
Dress up clothes	X		Weekly
Hats	X		After each child's use or use disposable hats that only one child wears.

If a surface is contaminated with body fluids: blood, saliva, mucus, vomit, urine or stools, wear disposable gloves. Use a multi-purpose cleaner, then disinfect with bleach solution and air dry. Clean immediately.

Supervision

What are the supervision requirements for preschool and kindergarten children?

Young children require supervision by a sufficient number of adults. This is known as the adult to child ratio. The second number in the adult/child ratio, the number of children, gives the maximum size of the group allowed before an additional adult (aide) needs to be added.

Recommended adult/child ratio	Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Catholic Schools	IL DCFS Licensing Standards	NAEYC Criteria
Preschool	1:10	1:10	1:10
Kindergarten	1:20	1:20	1:12

Group sizes go hand-in-hand with ratios. Group size should be limited to allow for adequate supervision of children and quality relationships with adults.

Recommended maximum group size	Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Catholic Schools	IL DCFS Licensing Standards	NAEYC Criteria
Preschool	20	20	20
Kindergarten	30	30	24

Group sizes are stated as ceilings, regardless of the size of the room or number of staff. A group of 20 with 2 adults is not the same psychological environment for children as a group of 40 with 4 adults even though each situation has a staff/child ratio of 1:10.

Must ratios be maintained at all times?

Yes. Adult/child ratios must be maintained at all times, even when children go to other activities or “specials”. Nap time is the only exception to this rule. Children may be under the direct supervision (staff in the same room) of 50% of the qualified staff during nap times provided the required staff/child ratio is maintained on the premises.

Is there a difference in the supervision required for preschool and kindergarten children?

Yes. Preschool children must be supervised by sight and sound at all times while at school. Kindergarten children who are doing tasks or using the bathroom, in a safe environment, are allowed to be out of the teacher’s sight and sound supervision for a short period of time. Teachers should check on kindergarten children if they do not return promptly to the group or if the adult at a child’s destination does not confirm the child’s arrival.

Teachers should count children at regular intervals throughout the day to confirm the safe whereabouts of all children. Counts of children are especially important when the children are moving from one place to another.

Attendance

Every program needs to have procedures in place for ensuring the safe arrival, departure and whereabouts of the children. A system should be implemented whereby attendance is tracked and reported to the office as soon as possible after the arrival of the children so that missing children are accounted for.

Each teacher should record the daily attendance of children on the Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Catholic Schools official attendance sheet. If Sign In/Sign Out procedures are also

used, then the sign in/out sheet includes the name of the child, the parent/guardian's name, the time the child arrived, and the time the child left. This provides proof of a child's attendance and decreases liabilities for a school. Teachers need to have a record of daily attendance within their classroom in case of emergencies.

Safe Playgrounds / Outdoor Areas

Are schools required to provide a playground with stationery equipment?

No. However, outdoor play and activities are recommended to be part of the daily schedule. An outdoor play area that is safe and protected should be provided for children to play. A minimum of 75 sq. feet per child of outside space is required for each child playing outdoors. Portable play equipment such as balls, jump ropes, hoops, parachutes, tricycles, etc., may be used. A plan for storing and transporting the portable play equipment should be put in place before purchasing.

How should the outdoor areas be kept safe?

Equipment and grounds must be inspected daily for cleanliness and safety. Glass and trash should be removed from all areas where children play. If there is playground equipment, it should be checked for sharp edges, splinters, protruding or rusty nails, or missing parts. There are required depths of shock-absorbing materials for use under play equipment that must be met at all times. If the soft surface underneath the equipment is wood or rubber chips, then these materials must be replenished on a regular basis.

Where can playground requirements be found?

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has established voluntary guidelines and makes playground safety publications available through its web site: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/playpubs.html> Look for the "Public Playground Safety Handbook".

How does the school ensure that the playground equipment is safe and/or appropriate for preschool or kindergarten children?

Currently, no mandatory state or federal standards exist regarding the manufacture or installation of playground equipment or surfaces. When purchasing equipment, talk with the contractor and/or equipment manufacturers to ensure that their equipment complies with the safety standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) which has established a voluntary industry standard for public playground safety (F 1487-93)

How can the school get their playground equipment inspected?

Contact the company that installed the equipment and ask if they do inspections. Or contact one of the organizations listed below for information about a playground inspector:

1. The National Recreation and Park Association provides Certified Playground Safety Inspectors. To find a CPSI, go to www.nrpa.org and follow the online instructions.
2. The National Program for Playground Safety provides training to become a Certified Early Childhood Outdoor Play Inspector. To find one in your area, go to <http://www.playgroundsafety.org/training/certified/outdoorInspectors/index.htm>

Whether the outdoor play area has installed playground equipment or portable play equipment is taken outside, one of the most crucial elements in outdoor play safety is SUPERVISION. Following are ways to improve outdoor play supervision:

- Maintain child-to-staff ratios at all times. Adult to child ratios should remain the same outdoors as indoors. If possible, increase the number of adults for outdoor play.
- Teach children about appropriate outdoor play behavior.
- Staff members should work together to keep all children within at least one staff member's line of sight. Staff on the playground should be like a lifeguard on the beach.
- Have a playground emergency plan and make sure everyone knows it.
- Make sure at least one person on the playground can communicate with a staff person inside without leaving the children alone.

Field Trips

Field trips can provide wonderful learning experiences for children of all ages. However, before selecting a field trip site or event, teachers should consider why they are taking children on a field trip. Is this an activity that can only take place away from the school, such as a visit to a children's theater? Or could this experience occur just as well in the classroom? If the decision has been made to take the children on a field trip, here are some points to consider:

Age-appropriateness

Safety concerns can arise when children get bored because the event is too long for their attention span. Children also may lose interest if they can't perform the activity, either because it is developmentally inappropriate or because there are too many children for the number of activities. When children get bored - look out! They will find something else to do such as wandering off or climbing the stair railings. Consider the developmental level of your children. Children enjoy hands-on and interactive activities rather than watching or listening to someone else. However, if it is hands-on, can the children perform that particular activity?

The Site

Is this site appropriate for the age group? The age of your children can affect your safety considerations. For example, taking a group of 20 four-year-olds to a shopping mall to see a clown might not be a good idea because there are too many places for the children to "escape" and get out of your sight. However, other sites might be much better suited for a field trip such as visiting a fire station or dentist's office.

Safety

Is the activity safe for children? Think about a visit to a petting farm. This can be an enriching experience for children to see and touch baby lambs, goats, and ducks however, there are still hazards. Some animals bite. Some animals are too big for children. When visiting a petting farm, plan extra adult supervision and be sure children are separated from large animals and/or potentially dangerous animals.

Transportation

Commercial transportation should be used for field trips. Refer to "Field Trips" in the OCS [Handbook for School Administrators](#). For the transportation of preschool children guidelines can be found on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's web site, www.nhtsa.gov and the Illinois State Board of Education's web site, www.isbe.state.il.us.

Permission Forms

The Office of Catholic Schools Archdiocese of Chicago standard **Field Trip Permission Form** must be used for all field trips. It can be found in the OCS [Handbook for School Administrators](#)

under "Field Trips". The **Medical and Emergency Notification Information and Authorization for Medical Treatment** form annually submitted by the parent/guardian for each student must be copied for the field trip. Teachers must bring the *signed* forms on the field trip. Copies of these signed forms are to remain in the school office.

Chaperones

If you need to increase the ratio of adults to children, field trips are an excellent opportunity to include parents or grandparents. However, all chaperones (volunteers) must be 21 years of age and in compliance with the Protecting God's Children and Youth regulations. Refer to "Chaperones/Supervision of School Activities" in the OCS [Handbook for School Administrators](#).

Supervision

The ratio of children to adults must be maintained at all times. Increasing the number of adults for off-site field trips is advisable. Plan adequate adult supervision, both during transportation and during the field trip activities. Do head counts frequently. Count your children as you leave the school, once they are in the vehicle, as they exit the vehicle, and when they get into the designated building or area.

Health & Safety

Refer to procedures in [The First 30 Minutes: School Crisis Response Handbook for Educators](#), "Field Trip Incidents." This handbook gives a list of what is needed in preparation for a field trip as well as what should be done in the event of an incident.

Teachers and chaperones must have cell phones in case of an emergency. All cell phone numbers should be exchanged.

While on a field trip, basic hygiene such as hand washing should be followed.

Recommendations

Research the site prior to the field trip. Evaluate it from a safety standpoint. Remember, most field trip sites are not designed to be "children proof." Inquire about the loading and unloading area at the site. Children should exit the vehicle and enter the area without crossing traffic areas or parking lots. Where will the children eat lunch? What about bathrooms? Etc.

Emergency Readiness

Each school must have a crisis management plan for dealing effectively with emergencies. All school personnel shall be informed in writing about their responsibilities and about the procedures in the event of an emergency.

Refer to OCS School Crisis Response Handbook for Educators, *The First 30 Minutes*

Refer to “Safety Standards” and “Security in the School Building” in the OCS Handbook for School Administrators

Also view the Archdiocese of Chicago “School Safety Strategies” DVD.

What is the best way to be prepared for an emergency?

It is the responsibility of the teacher to make sure the children know their role and what to do in case of an emergency. Different types of emergencies (fire, weather, injury, intruder, etc.) will necessitate different responses and even those will vary depending on the time of day and what the children are doing. For example, teaching staff will need to practice evacuation drills during regular class activity, naptime, gym time, etc. Extra staff may be needed to assist young children. Copies of the **Medical and Emergency Notification Information and Authorization for Medical Treatment** form for each child and the attendance list need to be taken with in case of evacuation.

What if the preschool and/or kindergarten are located in another building?

It is essential that a communication system exists between the main school office and the building where the early childhood program is located. Emergency telephone numbers and emergency procedures should be posted by the telephone. Security must be a priority. A special crisis management plan will need to be prepared for dealing with emergencies in that location.

First Aid and CPR

What are the requirements for First Aid and CPR training?

First Aid/CPR training of staff is required only if a school’s early childhood programs are IL DCFS licensed or by an accrediting body (such as NAEYC) that requires it. The requirements for each are as follows:

IL DCFS Licensing Standards

The center has on duty at all times at least one staff member who has successfully completed training and is currently certified in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the Heimlich maneuver. CPR certification must be specific for all age groups served, i.e., infant (birth to 12 months), child (one to eight years) and adults (eight years and older). **Section 407.100**

NAEYC Accreditation Criteria for Health Standard

At least one staff member who has a certificate showing satisfactory completion of pediatric first-aid training, including managing a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing for infants and children, is always present with **each group** of children. When a child in the group has a special Health condition that might require CPR, one staff person who has successfully completed training in CPR is present in the program at all times. **Criterion 5.A.03**

First Aid Kits

The following information is taken from IL DCFS Licensing Standards, Section 407.380:

First-aid kits are maintained and readily available for use:

- Programs with a capacity of fewer than 100 children shall maintain at least two first-aid kits, a kit for on-site and a travel kit for use on outings. Programs with a capacity of 100 or more children shall maintain at least three first-aid kits.
- When a program operates in various parts of a building or on more than one floor, a separate first-aid kit shall be maintained in each area or floor.
- The supplies for each first-aid kit shall be in a closed container which is clearly labeled as first-aid supplies and stored in a place that is accessible to staff at all times, but out of reach of children.

The on-site first aid kits shall contain the following supplies, at minimum:

- a. Disposable gloves (be aware of children with latex allergies)
- b. Scissors
- c. Tweezers
- d. Thermometer
- e. Bandage tape
- f. Sterile gauze pads
- g. Flexible roller gauze
- h. Triangular bandage
- i. Safety pins
- j. Eye dressing
- k. Pen/pencil and note pad
- l. Cold pack
- m. Adhesive bandages
- n. Current American Academy of Pediatrics or American Red Cross standard first-aid text or an equivalent first-aid guide

The travel first-aid kits for use on outings shall contain the above supplies (a first-aid chart may replace the required text) plus the following additional items:

- a. Water
- b. Soap
- c. Antiseptic cream or solution
- d. Telephone number/s of the school (preferably on a laminated card), and
- e. Coins for use in a pay phone

First-aid kits shall be restocked after use and an inventory shall be taken at least annually and recorded

In addition to the full first-aid kit maintained by the program, each individual classroom shall stock a supply of disposable gloves and adhesive bandages and restock these supplies as needed

The telephone number for Poison Control shall be posted at each telephone **1-800-222-1222**.

The Illinois Poison Center serves all of Illinois **24 hours a day, 365 days a year**. Staffed by nurses, physicians, pharmacists and other poison specialists, the IPC offers free, confidential poison prevention advice and treatment recommendations via a toll-free hot line.

Animals in the Classroom

Animals can be more than just fun friends for children. Research shows that having pets can benefit children of all ages. Pets can help children grow socially and emotional, as well as help their intellectual and physical development. For example, having a pet to talk to and touch can be a great psychological benefit to children, especially to shy youngsters.

What should be done to prepare for animals in the classroom?

If the classroom has pets or the teacher intends to add animals for a curriculum study (ex. chick hatching), parents need to be informed about them ahead of time. Children may have allergies or be afraid of animals. Also, the initial cost as well as the cost of maintaining the animals and the responsibility of caring for them must be decided before hand. How will the animals be taken care of over the weekend, holiday breaks and summer vacation?

Following are standards for keeping animals in an early childhood program:

1. Healthy household pets that present no danger to children are permitted on the premises unless prohibited by local health regulations.
2. A licensed veterinarian shall certify that dogs and cats have been inoculated against rabies. This certification shall be obtained when the animal is acquired (if four months of age or older) as required by 8 Ill Adm. Code 30, Animal Control Act. Gerbils, hamsters, and guinea pigs which appear healthy may be kept in the classroom if allowed by local health regulations.
3. All animals shall be physically separated from children both indoors and outdoors, except as a portion of a specifically planned program activity under the direct supervision of a staff member.
4. Children and staff shall wash their hands after touching or handling any animal.
5. Immediate treatment shall be obtained for any child who sustains a bite or scratch from an animal, and the child's parent/guardian shall be notified immediately. In addition, the school shall notify the county animal control administrator or designated agent and follow the provisions of the Illinois Animal Control Act [520 ILCS 5].
6. Animals and/or pets shall be properly housed, fed, and maintained in a safe, clean and sanitary condition at all times.
 - a. Domestic animals, birds or fowl shall not be permitted at any time in areas where foods are prepared or maintained.
 - b. A responsible staff person shall be assigned to the care of any animal of pet on the premises.
 - c. The school shall be free of stray animals which may cause injury and/or disease to children.
7. The presence of monkeys, ferrets, turtles, iguanas, psittacine birds (birds of the parrot family) or any wild or dangerous animal is prohibited in the school or classroom.

What is the best way to help children learn about health and safety?

There are several ways to teach children about health and safety. One of the most important ways is through example. Children learn more from what they see adults do than what adults say. Seeing how teachers wash their hands, clean tables and toys, and make healthy food and drink choices speak volumes to children about safe and healthy behavior.

Other ways children learn about health and safety is through daily routines. As children are reminded about when and why hands must be washed and how to do it properly, they are learning. When teachers sit with children at snack and lunch and discuss healthy food choices children gain knowledge. As children help to clean up the classroom, the importance of cleanliness is reinforced.

Finally, children learn about health and safety practices through the curriculum. Teachers should plan to discuss various aspects of health and safety during group times. Learning programs throughout the classrooms should contain items that are related to health and safety. Books are an excellent way to promote safe and healthy practices with children. *Appendix 4* of the book Healthy Young Children, A Manual for Programs, NAEYC, Susan S. Aronson, Editor contains an extensive list of children's literature about health, nutrition, and safety.

Meals and Snacks

Food for meals and/or snacks may be provided in one of 3 ways:

1. Food that is cooked or prepared at the school shall be done in a kitchen which has been inspected and approved in accordance with the Illinois Department of Public Health's Food Service Sanitation Code (77 Ill. Adm. Code 750) Refer to IL DCFS Licensing Standards, Section 407.330 for further requirements.
2. Food may be purchased from a licensed catering service. Preparation of food, whether on or off site, shall comply with the Food Service Sanitation Code. A copy of these regulations shall be available to appropriate staff. Food service shall be under the management of a State-certified food service manager as required by the Food Handling Regulation Enforcement Act [410 ILCS 625]. **Archdioceses of Chicago Food Service Professionals fulfill this requirement as well as nutrition and menu requirements.**
3. Foods provided by parents for their child's consumption shall be clearly labeled with the child's name and stored properly. Children should not share or trade food.

How often do young children need to eat?

Food should be served according to the amount of time the child spends at school. Children shall be offered food at intervals of not less than two hours and not more than three hours apart, unless the child is asleep.

What about snack?

Snack can be scheduled as a whole group activity or as an individual choice activity during center time. Children can bring their own snack from home, the snack food can be provided by the school or families can take turns providing the snack. Regardless of how snack is provided and/or scheduled, proper hand washing and table cleaning procedures need to be followed.

How does the program ensure that food brought from home is safe?

Any foods that are brought into the school to be served to the whole group must be store bought and prepackaged. Fruits and vegetables must be whole or prepackaged. Upon agreement of the school, commercially prepared foods may be brought in occasionally by parents as part of holiday or birthday celebrations. Food brought in for this purpose must arrive unopened as packaged by the bakery or manufacturer, or it shall not be accepted. If there are children in the class with food allergies, a list of "safe" foods that can be sent for snack or celebrations should be sent home to all families.

Proper hand washing and cleaning of tables contributes to a clean surface for eating. Consequently, lunch bags and lunch boxes should not be placed on the table.

How does the program promote healthy snacks?

Teachers should communicate with parents about healthy snacks and lunches. Parents can be given ideas for appropriate snacks and meals through the class newsletter or web site or parent handbook. Some schools may ask families to contribute money to a snack fund or they may set aside money from curriculum fees so that the early childhood program can use these funds to purchase healthy snacks for the children.

What can be done to make snacks and meals a learning experience for children?

Children should do as much as possible for themselves during snacks and meals. Children can take turns helping to wash tables with soapy water (teachers should complete table cleansing with a sanitizing solution) and set out napkins for a snack or meal. Tables and chairs must be appropriate to size of children.

If it is a group snack, then whenever possible, the food should be placed in serving containers and passed around the table so that children can help themselves, using serving utensils such as tongs, large spoons or scoopers. During lunch, children should try to open as much of their lunch items as possible and be encouraged to clean up after the meal. Teachers should sit with the children during meals and snacks to provide supervision, encourage conversation and model good eating habits. Children should be encouraged to eat, but not forced or bribed and food shall never be used as a punishment or reward.

What are the procedures for children with food allergies?

The school must do everything reasonably possible to protect children with food allergies (ex. peanut) from contact with the problem food. The family of the child with food allergies must give consent for posting information about that child's food allergy and, if consent is given, then the school posts that information in the food preparation areas and in the areas of the facility that the child uses, so it is a visual reminder to all those who interact with the child during the program day. If necessary, the child's health provider gives the program and individualized care plan that is prepared in consultation with family members and any other specialists involved in the child's care.

Where can the school get information on how to manage food allergies?

Schools can provide a safe environment for students with food allergies by working with the students, their parents, school staff, and physicians. The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network www.foodallergy.org or 1 (800) 929-4040 provides excellent resources for schools, such as:

- School Guidelines for Managing Students with Food Allergies
- Food Allergy Action Plan
- Teacher's Checklist
- Sample letter to parents
- Posters

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Parents are the most important people in their children's lives. A parent is a child's first teacher. As a result, the needs of children are met most effectively when parents are involved in their education. When teachers understand this, they are motivated to create the climate for a working partnership that will benefit families, teachers, and especially children. This partnership between school and home will help ensure that children's needs are met. As parents learn more about the philosophy and goals of the program they are able to ensure that learning and growth are supported at home.

Building the Partnership

Two necessary elements for a partnership between home and school are mutual respect and trust. Each party brings something valuable to the relationship. Teachers bring knowledge of

We cannot pretend to work for the best interests of children while ignoring the needs of their parents.

--Joyce L. Frett

child development and early childhood education. Teachers are able to observe a child with other adults and peers and can assess that child's development in relation to other children who are in the same stage of development. The values and beliefs that underlie the early childhood program as well as information gained about individual children's learning and development can be shared with parents.

On the other hand, parents bring important knowledge and experiences to the partnership. Parents are experts on their own children. They can provide insights into their child's unique characteristics, strengths, needs, and interests. They also have dreams and expectations that must be considered and respected. Teachers have an obligation to respond to these expectations and help parents understand how the developmentally appropriate practices of the early childhood program provide the best opportunity for children now and in the future. Additionally, in situations in which the teachers' cultural backgrounds are different from the child's, parents are the best resource to gather information about the child and how he relates to his world.

Some ways to build a partnership with parents are as follows:

- Hold an open house for parents. Give a tour of the classroom and talk about the philosophy and goals of the program. Invite parents to ask questions. If there are parents who speak another language, encourage them to bring someone along who can interpret for them.
- Ask for parents' expectations and concerns. Find out how parents feel about having their child in the program. Listen to them in a responsive way.
- Get to know all the parents. Learn their names. Last names may be different than their child's. Find out what their interests are, who is in their family, and what their work is so you can relate to them in a personal way throughout the year.
- Be very clear about how important their involvement is. Let parents know there are a variety of ways that they can be involved in their children's learning. Invite them to share their interests and talents with the children.
- Ask for and try out suggestions that parents offer. When parents see that they are taken seriously, they are more likely to become more involved.

- Let parents know about the good things their child is doing. Talk to parents about what their child is doing well and ways they are learning and developing.
- Keep comments parents make about their child or family in strict confidence. These comments should be used to help teachers work with children, and not discussed with others.
- Partnering with families includes involving them in a variety of ways. Not all parents can be involved in the classroom during the day so it is important to offer some alternatives to volunteering in the classroom. The following ideas are only some of the many ways to involve parents in the program:
 - Make them feel welcome – parent volunteers can help in many ways if the staff clearly defines expectations and needs.

Help at lunch	Prepare bulletin boards
Read to children	Develop and present activities
Talk about jobs	Participate in field trips
 - Give them something to do at home that will be helpful in the classroom.
 - Make recordings of books
 - Make play dough
 - Provide needed arts and craft materials – send a list of needed items.
 - Special events and activities can offer parents ways to share skills and fun with their own children and the children of other families in the program.

Family photo day	Food events such as picnics,
End of year celebration	breakfasts, Thanksgiving luncheons,
Grandparents' day	and other pot-luck activities
 - Include preschool and kindergarten parents in school-wide events such as reading nights, gymnasium camp outs, arts and crafts fairs, book fairs, skating parties, etc.

Communication with Families

Good communication with families is critical to developing and maintaining partnerships with families. It is important for children to see genuine communication between their parents and teachers. It assures them that their two worlds of home and school are connected. Communication between home and school should be both formal and informal.

Formal communication is necessary when teachers want to share information with all parents and when the information must be accurate. When a special event is planned, policies change, or a child has a contagious disease and all families must be informed, written notices are necessary. Some ways to communicate in a formal ways with families are as follows:

- **A parent bulletin board:** This should be located near the entrance to the classroom and should include important notices. Articles of interest, a calendar of events, monthly menus, upcoming meetings, and photos of children involved in activities can be included. Parents could contribute to the board as well with recipes, articles, announcements, etc.
- **Weekly newsletters:** These newsletters should include what children are doing in the classroom, the theme of the week, announcements about upcoming events. A consistent format such as a template that is filled in each week makes it easy for teachers to create and for parents to find information. If some parents speak another language, ensure that the messages are in that language.
- **A message or mailbox center:** Provide a box or message pocket for each family where parents can pick up information being sent home.

- **Journals or “Take-home” folders:** Each family has a journal or folder that travels between home and school. Parents and teachers can share information about children and flyers or notices can be tucked inside.
- **Parent Handbook:** A parent handbook should inform parents about the program and be kept up-to-date. It should be revised after the annual program evaluation.
- **E-mail or School’s web site:** Messages can be sent out to individual parents or to all families as a group (make sure that all families have e-mail addresses) or postings can be put on the school’s web site. This should be in addition to other methods of communication as not all families may have access to the internet.

Informal communication happens naturally on a daily basis when children are dropped off at school or picked up. This kind of communication is crucial for building an effective partnership between teachers and parents. Following are some ideas for informal communication with families. If families do not drop children off, teachers can communicate in the following ways on the telephone and during parent conferences. What is important is that communication is frequent and non-threatening.

- Greet parents by name and have something specific to say to each one.
- Be respectful of culture and expectations. Ask parents about their cultural expectations and norms and use that information to help plan holiday celebrations, interactions with children, and curriculum plans.
- Share something specific about what their child did that day.
- Ask for parents’ advice or suggestions about their child.
- Use active listening so that parents know that you take them seriously.
- Give support to parents when they need it. If their child is having difficulty separating, encourage them to be reassuring and let them know that the child will be all right.
- When talking with parents clarify your understanding of a statement or question that you are not sure about.
- Be careful to word messages so that parents do not feel judged or defensive.

Orientation

Getting off to a good start is the best way to develop the family–school partnership. Orientation must start with the first contact with the parent when initial interest in the program is expressed. This can be done through a brochure or other handout that describes the early childhood program and an invitation to visit the program and ask questions.

Once the child has been enrolled a complete orientation packet and a schedule of orientation activities should be given to the family. The orientation packet is not the same as the enrollment package which the parent or guardian completes for the office and early childhood program records. The enrollment package includes health and immunization forms, an emergency contact information form and the handbook of general school policies and procedures. Its purpose is to make certain that the office has required records prior to the child’s attendance in the school. The purpose of the orientation packet is to begin a relationship with the child’s family. Suggestions for orientation packet:

- Early Childhood Program Handbook
- Family information form (*see sample that follows this section*)
- Description of curriculum
- Daily schedule
- Suggestions for ways parents can be involved or volunteer

- Separation policy
- If parents provide snack, include healthful snack guidelines
- School calendar – highlight dates for open house and parent conferences
- Program newsletter

Suggestions for initial discussion with family:

- Go through orientation packet and share information about and basis for curriculum and daily schedule
- Tell parent how and when they can contact you
- Let them know your expectations for involvement – volunteering, reading materials that are sent home with child, and informing staff of any changes in family situations, illnesses, or upcoming vacations and absences.
- Inform parents of how and when formal assessments will be done
- Encourage parents to read handbook and discuss any policies and procedures which are not clearly understood
- Encourage parents to look for a newsletter on a specific day of each week.

In addition to written information about the early childhood program, a schedule of orientation activities will help families to feel welcome and assist the child in the transition from the home to school. Suggestions for orientation activities:

- Take a picture of the child with family member(s)
- Take a close-up picture of the child (use this to begin portfolio)
- Invite parent to stay with child for a period of time the first day of school (This is generally recommended for preschool; however, if kindergarten is the child's first school experience, it may be useful in kindergarten as well.)
- If possible, begin the school year with attendance by small groups of children rather than whole class or start with half-day sessions. If doing half-day sessions, invite parents to bring sack lunches and to stay and eat with children as a way to support their child's comfort in the classroom.

◀ Refer to "Family and School Associations" in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrator](#)

Family Information Form

Please help us to know your child better by completing the information asked for in the questions on this form. Providing this information will help us to help your child make an easier transition from home to school. It will also help the staff to begin to get an understanding of your child's personality, strengths, and needs.

1. By what name is your child usually called (nickname)? _____.
2. Does your child have any disabilities or health problems such as allergies that we should be aware of? If so, please explain _____.
3. What words does your child use regarding the use of the bathroom?
_____.
4. If your child has attended school before, was the experience enjoyable? _____.
If answering no, please suggest reasons for the answer _____.
5. Does your child have any specific behaviors of which the program should be aware?
_____.
6. If your child has unusual fears, what are they? _____.
7. Does your child use the following at home? (please circle)
Crayons Scissors Pencil Chalk Markers Paint
8. What foods does your child like? _____.
9. What foods does your child dislike? _____.
10. List the names and ages of other children in your family.

11. What do you see as your child's strengths?

_____.
12. Is there any area in which you anticipate difficulty for your child? (e.g., sharing, following directions, etc.)

_____.
13. What goals do you have for your child? _____.
14. What other information would you like us to know about your child? _____.

Child's Name _____

Parent / Guardian Signature _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. All information will be kept confidential.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent conferences should be conducted a minimum of two times a year. These could take place about a month or two after school starts or at the end of the first quarter, again after the start of the new calendar year, or in the spring before the end of the school year. Conferencing hours should be flexible—evening times along with times during the school day. Some schools find that Sundays allow most parents the opportunity to attend conferences. Conferences should run approximately 15 minutes. Teachers can provide parent education materials or surveys for those parents who may be waiting for their turn to meet.

Refer to “Reporting Student Progress” in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#)

Successful parent conferences require that teachers be prepared. Think about and write down the positive things you will say along with the areas that you feel need some improvement or growth. Using documented materials collected from the child’s classroom experiences help parents understand how their children are learning and developing.

Refer to the “Assessment of Children” section of this handbook for the list of assessment methods.

Tips for Parent Conferences:

- Establish a relaxed tone. Begin the conference with some informal social conversation.
- Set clear expectations by explaining how the conference will proceed and how much time is available.
- Hold conferences in a place where your conversation is private. Make sure everyone is sitting on the same size chairs, at the same eye level. Don’t sit with a desk between you and the parents as this can feel confrontational.
- Ask for parent input before sharing your point of view. Ask parents what their child thinks of the program or if they have noticed any changes in their child.
- Focus on the positive throughout the conference. Choose words carefully so that what is said is not offensive. Avoid using words such as “immature” or “problem behavior” that can easily be misinterpreted and can do irreparable damage to the home-school relationship.
- Organize your comments so that parents have a complete picture of their child. Include information about areas that the child is most interested in, how their child reacts to group activities, routines and self-help skills, special interests and friends, and development in all areas—social-emotional, physical, and cognitive.
- Ensure that parents feel comfortable asking questions and voicing concerns. Use these questions and concerns to help parents learn more about the curriculum. Reassure them that a developmentally appropriate approach will ensure their child’s success both now and in the future by using specific examples of learning and development.
- Be sure to follow through on any concerns or information requested in a timely manner.
- Don’t forget to smile.

Addressing Separation Issues⁶

Separation anxiety is a universal experience, although individuals experience its effects in different ways and degrees. Healthy attachments with caregivers are vital to healthy growth and development. Forming attachments is basic to human nature and has its roots in infancy when mother and child form a bond of love. The threat of separation from the loved person can cause anxiety, sadness or anger. Researchers have identified three stages in children experiencing separation: protest, despair, and either adjustment or emotional detachment. Children's response to these stages may be different and the degree to which they suffer may vary. Even the order of the stages may differ but overall they offer some ideas for understanding.

Stage 1: Protest: Some children protest for a short period of time and others for weeks. Some children protest immediately while others delay their protest. Some may resort to pounding on the door or throwing themselves on the floor to try to get their parent to return.

Stage 2: Despair: When the child loses hope that the parent will return, the protest ends and the second stage of despair begins. The child may withdraw and show little interest in what is going on in the classroom.

Stage 3: Adjustment or Emotional Detachment: The child begins to adjust to the new surroundings. However, some children do not adjust and become detached. This results in the avoidance of others, even the returning parent. The length of time this detachment lasts will depend on the family relationships and previous separations.

All human beings need a secure place from which they can leave and return to when necessary. This secure place may be a parent's comforting arms or it can be a teacher's supportive attitude. Positive new experiences with reassuring adults enable the child to continue venturing out to create new bonds.

The child who protests when brought to a new school is acting out in a healthy manner. He is looking for an outlet for his confusing feelings. The protesting behavior brings the new teacher and the child together to form a new attachment. At times teachers are distressed by the crying or the whining, but these behaviors are healthy ways of coping and adapting.

People deal with separation issues throughout their lives. Teachers need to understand that their role in understanding these strong emotions is critical because negative experiences can reoccur throughout life.. The school professionals have an obligation to help parents and children move from family life to group life with a minimum of stress.

What teachers can do to help parents with separation:

- Inform parents that your school has a separation policy to ease the child's transition from home. This helps the parent to understand separation and makes the separation easier because the parent sees that the school cares enough about their child to plan for his emotional well-being.
- Let parent know that the child may be upset initially and/or may have a delayed separation reaction.
- Help parents to understand their own needs in separating from the child.
- Parent and child should be able to tour the facility beforehand.
- Send a welcoming letter to the family from the teaching staff. (Not an informational letter.)

⁶ Source: *Separation* by Kathy Jarvis.

- Have an orientation night for questions and explanation of separation policy before the school year begins. Suggest to parents that they explain to their child what to expect when school begins. Tell the child that school is a place where the teacher will help him, take care of him, let him have things to play with, help learn new things, give him things to eat, and provide opportunities to interact with other children. Be sure to explain that the parent should be positive about the school experience.
- Ask parents to bring a family picture and a transition object (favorite toy or book) on the first day of school.
- Divide the classroom population into two groups and have a shortened first day (one and a half hours) for each of the groups
- Tell parents that all children should be accompanied by a parent or other relative on the first day of school. The parent should be prepared to stay the whole time.
- If a parent needs to stay more than the first day, the school can provide coffee in another room so that the parent can gradually separate from the child.

What teachers can do to help children with separation:

- Have each teacher send a letter and a picture to each child a few weeks before school starts.
- Have the child's cubby labeled before school starts and have individual nametags prepared for children, parents, and teachers.
- Show each child around the room on the first day and talk to the child about what is going to happen on the first day. Be sure to show the child where the bathroom is located and where the children nap.
- Provide consistent routines.
- Give the child many opportunities for success. (Provide choices of sensory activities such as play dough, easel painting, sand or water.)
- If a child brings something from home or takes something from his mother when she leaves he is allowed to hold it or keep it nearby if he needs it for comfort. The first few days may not be the best time to teach sharing.
- Instructions about the program and what is going to happen should be repeated individually as much as possible. Children new to group experience do not usually understand instructions.
- Standing in line or waiting for activities to begin should be avoided.
- Avoid speaking about the child's adjustment when the child is present and can overhear you.
- Set up your classroom with a minimum of materials. Children will be less confused if the environment is orderly and they can easily access the materials.
- Try to send the child home with something he has made by himself--a simple painting or drawing.
- Understand that some children will need a continuation of the parent presence, many will need repetition of the teacher explaining once more about the bathroom, that the toys and materials are for everyone to use, that the child will go home again etc.

Some specific activities:

- Have a family picture for each child that the child can carry around and use when napping.
- Plan games which allow child to control coming and going, hiding and finding, losing and finding, etc.
- Allow for play themes that deal with separation anxiety.
- Encourage the development of memories about school experiences and about home.
- Develop a large chart of the daily schedule with pictures of the children participating in the various activities throughout the day.

What is a separation policy?

A separation policy is a statement, in the early childhood parent handbook, that explains the program's procedures for parents to say goodbye to their children at drop-off time during the first few weeks of the new school year. Whatever system is put into place, it should be healthy for the child and respectful of the other children in the class as well as the teacher's need to establish authority and control.

For example, the separation policy can be based on a time frame of 4 weeks.

Week 1: Parents are welcome to stay in the classroom for the first hour.

Week 2: Parents are welcome to come into the classroom, but must leave at the first bell.

Week 3: Parents are welcome to come into the school, but must say goodbye at the classroom door.

Week 4: Parents must say goodbye at the school doors.

The separation policy does not exclude parents from visiting the school or observing in their child's classroom. It is just a means to encourage the child's independence and establish the necessary classroom and school routines and schedules at the beginning of the year.

Starting school, what children see as "real school" or the "big school" is an important event in their lives. It can also be a big step for parents. When talking with families about their child's adjustment it is important to be sensitive and caring. Teachers need to communicate how important families are and gain their support in order to work with children most effectively and make the child's first school experience a successful one.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Identifying and Addressing Special Needs

The section on developmental screening has been adapted and reprinted from Developmental Screening in Early Childhood: A Guide, 5th Edition by Sally Atkins-Burnett and Samuel Meisels, Washington DC: NAEYC, 2005 with permission from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Developmental Screening

What is a developmental screening?

A developmental screening test or “instrument” briefly surveys a young child’s abilities in language, reasoning, gross motor, fine motor, and personal/social development to determine quickly and efficiently whether that child should undergo further assessment and evaluation. The screening process should incorporate information from multiple sources. In addition to developmental screening instruments, information about children should be collected from medical examinations, hearing and vision tests, and parent questionnaires and interviews.

What is the purpose of developmental screening?

Screening is only the initial phase of a process of educational assessment and intervention. Early childhood screening is performed to identify children who might benefit from early educational intervention or from special services before entering kindergarten or first grade. The developmental screening is provided as the next step of the Childfind process.

What is Child Find?

Child Find is a continuous process of public awareness activities, screening and evaluation designed to *locate, identify, and refer as early as possible* all young children with disabilities and their families who are in need of Early Intervention Program (Part C) or Preschool Special Education (Part B/619) services of the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)

Who is responsible for providing Child Find services?

Every Local Education Agency (LEA) in the state is required to provide “procedures which ensure that all children residing within the jurisdiction of the LEA who are disabled, regardless of the severity are identified, located and evaluated”. The LEA is the public school district in which your school is located. For example, in the city of Chicago, the LEA is the Chicago Public Schools.

Can the Catholic school conduct developmental screening?

Yes. However, as previously stated, screening should incorporate information from multiple sources, such as a health exams, vision and hearing screening results and parent questionnaires and interviews as well.

For a list, description, and sources of standardized developmental and behavioral screening tools, see “Developmental Surveillance and Screening of Infants and Young Children”, policy statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Children with Disabilities in *Pediatrics* (Vol. 108, No. 1, July 2001) or online at www.aap.org/polic/re0062.html
Also refer to Developmental Screening in Early Childhood, A Guide by Samuel J. Meisels & Sally Atkins-Burnett.

What is the next step?

Screening results should be shared with parents as soon as possible. For children in the “rescreen” category, those who display mild, nonspecific delays in development, the data from the screening can be used to initiate an individualized classroom program. This should be developed by the teacher with direct involvement of the parents and preferably with the assistance of a resource teacher or consultant. If, the child does not show significant improvement after a period of time and is rescreened and the second set of data corresponds to the initial screening information, then that child should be referred for further diagnostic assessment.

Children in the “refer” category should be referred for further diagnostic assessment. All referrals need parental consent.

What is difference between developmental screening and diagnostic assessment?

Screening is a limited procedure and can only indicate that a child *might* have a problem that should be investigated further. Diagnostic assessment is a process used to identify definitely those children who do have special needs. Diagnostic assessments probe more deeply within developmental areas and are lengthier, some administered over a period of several days or weeks. Diagnostic assessments should be performed by a multidisciplinary team of professionals and utilize multiple methods for gathering information such as tests, observations, interviews and parent reports.

Only a diagnostic assessment process, not a screening, should be used to label children, assign them to particular programs, or develop specific intervention procedures. It is only through comprehensive assessment and evaluation in a multidisciplinary setting that the existence of a disabling condition can be determined definitively, in individual educational plan (IEP) can be developed, and the most appropriate intervention/remediation services can be specified.

What is the difference between a developmental screening and readiness testing?

Developmental screening tests focus on the process whereby children acquire skills. Readiness tests focus on what actual skills children have acquired. Readiness tests are used for group placement and curriculum planning. Developmental screening instruments identify children who may have a learning problem or handicapping condition that could affect their potential for learning.

Addressing Behavior or Social/Emotional Issues

What if the child’s behavior or social/emotional development is the issue?

What should a teacher do when they recognize that a child’s behavior, developmental skills or social/emotional skills just don’t seem appropriate? Teachers know what to expect of a child given a particular age, but what they often have difficulty with is what to do when the child’s behavior is out of the norm. Early intervention is critical when a child displays unusual or difficult behavior, inappropriate social and emotional skills or delayed development.

The following guidelines should be reviewed by the principal to determine how they fit in with the established school guidelines.

Where To Begin?

Teachers should do their best to get to know their students and their families. Teachers should thoroughly read the “Family Information Form” or the parent questionnaire that is done as part of the screening process, for each child. If the teacher has any concerns about the information provided they should diplomatically ask the parent to elaborate. The more information the family offers on the child and home life, the better the understanding.

All kids are gifted; some just open their packages earlier than others.

Michael Carr

From the child’s first day of school, the teacher should begin to make mental notes regarding any unusual behavior. Most teachers know that many of these unusual behaviors will disappear as the child becomes more comfortable separating from their families or caregivers and becoming familiar with their teacher, peers and the routine of the classroom. Teachers should also be aware of how the environment or schedule affects the child and see if changes or accommodations impact the behavior. However, when the behavior persists after three or four weeks, the teacher should begin to formally document.

Documenting

When a teacher documents the child’s behavior, they should include the time of day, the climate of the classroom, and the specifics regarding the child’s behavior. The teacher should also note if the behavior is in any way impacting other children or the climate of the classroom. Teachers should never document what they “think” the problem is, only document the behaviors displayed.

Talk With the Parent

After documenting the behavior the teacher should speak with the parent and provide feedback on what they are experiencing in the classroom with regard to the child’s behavior or mood. The teacher should ask the parent if they are seeing this type of behavior at home or in social settings outside of home. This allows the parent to share information that they may have not thought necessary prior to this discussion. For example a medication change, changes in the family constellation etc.

Acknowledge the parent’s understanding of their child by asking them for ideas on how you as the teacher can best handle this behavior or concern in the classroom. If the parent sees this behavior at home, collaborate on your approach in order to create consistency. It should be agreed that the teacher and parents will remain in contact and will meet again after a week or two of putting in place the agreed upon action plan.

The Role of the Principal

Teachers should involve their principal in this process. Teachers should discuss with the principal the documentation and the planned approach with the parents. Principals can decide whether or not they want to be directly involved in the parent communication at this stage. Principals should be provided feedback after the teacher and parent meet.

After the teacher discusses her concerns with the parents and an action plan is agreed upon, the teacher should put it to practice in the classroom. The teacher should continue to document the behavior and the results of the approach.

Persistent Behavior

If the behavior persists despite several varied approaches, a meeting should be arranged with the parents to discuss a different course of action. It is best if the principal attends this meeting to offer necessary support. At this point, the teacher and principal may need to suggest to the parents that they seek outside professional support.

Depending on the child's issue, the professional support can be in the form of a consultation or a full evaluation. There are many resources in the community that provide either consultation or evaluation; the difficulty lies in locating them. Pediatricians should be able to provide some direction for the parents. Principals and teachers should make themselves aware of resources in their community.

Seeking an Evaluation

A trained professional should conduct the evaluation or consultation. The evaluation will determine the cause of the behavior and will provide recommendations for addressing the behavior both at school and home.

There are many resources available to evaluate children; these are just a few ideas:

- Contact one of the Archdiocesan Centers for Inclusive Education. Information about the sites can be found on the Office of Catholic Schools portal at <http://ocs.archchicago.org/>. Go to the Academic Excellence tab and click on Inclusive Education.
- The local public school that is assigned to the private school that the child attends will provide a full evaluation at no charge. It is part of the child's right under the nation's federal education law – the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). In order for a child to be evaluated, the parent must go to the public school and request that their child be enrolled as a non-attending student and request that the school evaluate their child. The school should outline the procedures to be followed within the assigned district and give the parent the time frame involved in an evaluation process. The parent or teacher can contact the Illinois State Board of Education to receive a book entitled "A Parents' Guide -The Educational Rights of Students with Disabilities" (217)782-5589 (Springfield, IL) (312)814-5560 (Chicago). When the evaluation is completed the public school should meet with the family, and any other parties the family wishes to be involved, to provide the feedback. The evaluation will provide recommendations for treatment. The treatment may be offered within the public school or within a state/city agency.
- Hospitals with pediatric departments will either provide an evaluation or will refer the parents to a resource that does.
- There are clinicians in private practice that will provide evaluations for a set fee. Typically pediatricians will have a list of these clinicians.

The Evaluation Process

When a child is evaluated, typically the evaluator will seek input from the teacher. The evaluator will need to get permission from the parent to contact the teacher. The evaluator will either phone the teacher or send them a form to complete. Many evaluators will ask to observe the child in the classroom. The evaluation process usually takes anywhere from 3-10 hours, which is usually broken down into 1-2 hour sessions over a few days. As part of the evaluation, the parents are interviewed. The presenting issue is discussed and the parents are asked to

provide a medical and social history on both the child and family. After the evaluation process is complete it may take anywhere from 2-4 weeks for the data to be compiled in the form of a report. This report will cover the presenting issue, the findings of the evaluation, the evaluator's conclusion and recommendations for treating the issue. The evaluator will go over the report with the parents.

Evaluation Feedback

During the evaluation process it is critical that the teacher stay in touch with the parents to follow the progress. Most teachers will have to encourage the parents to meet with them after the report is generated. It is absolutely critical that the teachers understand the findings and the recommendations provided in order to effectively address the issue in the school setting. This does not mean that the parents have to provide the report to the school (although this should be encouraged) rather the parents should meet with the teacher and principal to provide feedback based on the evaluation.

Understanding the results of the evaluation and the recommendations will help a teacher and principal design the necessary approach to help the child. Depending on the severity of the issue and the degree of resources suggested in the recommendation, it may be necessary for the teacher and the principal to determine if their program is appropriate. Schools have varying degrees of resources and it is important that teachers and principals recognize their limitations. The best interest of the child in all areas of development (social, emotional and developmental) should be considered in making this decision.

Resources	
For schools in suburban Cook and Lake counties: To find your school's local public school district, go to: http://illinois.educationbug.org/school-districts/ or http://www.greatschools.org/schools/districts/illinois/IL	For city of Chicago schools: Chicago Public Schools www.cps.k12.us 773.553.1000 To find a CPS school, go to: http://www.cps.edu/schools/find_a_school/pages/findaschool.aspx
United Stand Family Center 3731 W. 62 nd St. Chicago, IL 60629 773-585-4499 Dr. Kim Mis, C.S.S.F., Ex. Director Counseling, testing, school consultation/intervention	FranCenter, Inc. 1510 Plainfield Rd., Suite 1 Darien, IL 60561 630.541.8162 www.francenter.com
Advocate Illinois Masonic Hospital Pediatric Developmental Center 836 W. Wellington Chicago, IL 60657 773.296.7340	Tuesdays Child (treats children with challenging behaviors) 4028 W. Irving Park Rd 773.282.5274
The University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics 1.888.UCH.0200 (1-888-824-0200)	Belle Center (special education services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy) 1754 West Wilson Chicago, IL 60640 773.878.7868
Caregiver Connections-Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants 312-823-1414 A free service for schools participating in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)	The Center for Children and Families Erikson Graduate School in Child Development 451 North LaSalle Street Chicago, Illinois 60654-4510 www.erikson.edu 312.893.7119 or email
Family Resource Center on Disabilities 20 East Jackson Blvd.	

Chicago, IL 60604
312.939.3513
800.952.4199
www.frcd.org

centerforchildrenandfamilies@erikson.edu

RTI – Response to Intervention

What is RTI?

Response to intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities.

—Source: [National Center on Response to Intervention](#)

What is the RTI approach?

The three-tiered model is the most common RTI design. A tiered model is designed to offer instructional support at increasing levels of intensity according to student need, and with specific features:

Tier 1: Screening and Group Interventions (all students)

Tier 2: Targeted Interventions (10-15% of students)

Tier 3: Intensive Interventions and Comprehensive Education (5-10% of students)

How is RTI implemented?

The students' level of academic performance is measured using universal screenings and/or the results from state or district-wide tests. Students who are "at-risk" are identified and receive supplemental instruction or interventions, in small groups during the regular school day. Student progress is continuously monitored using a scientifically validated screening process such as curriculum based measurement. Progress monitoring is an essential component of the RTI process. To implement progress monitoring, the students' current levels of performance are determined and goals are identified for learning that will take place over time. Teachers also use progress monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.

What is Curriculum Based Measurement?

Curriculum Based Measurement or CBM is the method of tracking and recording a child's progress in specific learning areas. Using CBM, teachers regularly assess student's performance using very brief, simple tests.

Some examples of CBM are:

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

<http://dibels.uoregon.edu>

AIMSweb

<http://aimsweb.com>

Monitoring Basic Skills Progress (MBSP)

<http://www.proedinc.com>

Children's Progress Academic Assessment

<http://www.childrensprogress.com>

More information on these and other scientifically based progress monitoring tools is available from the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring at www.studentprogress.org

Regardless of the RTI model used, schools should involve parents at the earliest stages of RTI by explaining the process in meetings, requesting parent consent and providing written intervention plans.

RTI alone is not sufficient to identify a learning disability. At any point in the RTI process, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) allows parents to request a formal evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services. For more information on IDEA provisions, see the National Center for Learning Disabilities Parent Guide to IDEA at www.LD.org/IDEAGuide

—Source: “A Parent’s Guide to Response-to-Intervention”, National Center for Learning Disabilities www.LD.org

A Model for RTI in Pre-K: Recognition and Response*

What is Recognition & Response?

The Recognition and Response Project is a multi-tier model for use with 3 to 5 year-olds in pre-kindergarten settings (e.g., child care, Head Start, preschool, public pre-k). Recognition & Response is a translation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model designed for school-age students. Recognition and Response is designed to help early childhood teachers and parents recognize children who show signs of learning difficulty and respond in ways that help them experience early school success. It consists of four components:

- screening, assessment, and progress monitoring (recognition),
- research-based curriculum and instruction for all children and validated interventions for individual children who need additional supports (response),
- an intervention hierarchy, and
- a collaborative problem-solving process that involves teachers, specialists, and parents.

Recognition & Response is an emerging practice in early childhood. A number of features of the proposed Recognition & Response system make it developmentally appropriate for use with children as young as 3 or 4 years of age. For example, there is limited reliance on formal diagnosis and labeling. The overarching goal of Recognition & Response is for teachers to use assessment as part of an integrated instructional system to make improvements in the general early childhood program and to plan focused interventions for individual children who require additional supports.

*The conceptual framework for the Recognition and Response system was developed by the University of North Carolina’s FPG Child Development Institute in collaboration with the National Center for Learning Disabilities, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Communication Consortium Media Center, and key state partners in Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, and New Jersey.

The Recognition and Response web site, www.recognitionandresponse.org, offers information and resources to help early educators address the needs of young children 3 to 5 year-olds) who show signs that they may not be learning in an expected manner, even before they begin kindergarten.

Roadmap to Pre-K RTI: Applying Response to Intervention in Preschool Settings, National Center for Learning Disabilities www.rtinetwork.org

◀Refer to “Inclusive Education” in the [OCS Handbook for School Administrators](#)

Also refer to the Handbook for Inclusive Education, Teaching Students with Differing Learning Needs on the OCS Portal at <http://ocs.archchicago.org/> in the Academic Excellence section

Section III

CURRICULUM

Laying the Foundation

The early childhood curriculum is best defined as a framework that guides adults in creating an environment, planning activities, and facilitating children's growth and development. Themes, concepts and activities are constructed in response to the interests and developmental levels of the children in a particular classroom. There is no one resource that encompasses a total curriculum package. Rather, teachers must use several resources and be creative in designing their curriculum. The foundation of any curriculum is the philosophy and goals of the program. These must be carefully thought through and used to guide all decisions about curriculum planning. The curriculum should always reflect the philosophy and goals of the program.

This early childhood handbook addresses both kindergarten and preschool. Therefore the information in the curriculum section applies to both preschool and kindergarten classrooms. The Kindergarten section provides additional information specifically for kindergarten teachers.

Statement of Philosophy

Every school has a written philosophy that explains educational theories and beliefs that guide curriculum planning. Early childhood programs are based on an understanding of how children develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically. A sample philosophy may be,

"The early childhood program provides a curriculum designed to meet and enhance the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical developmental level of the individual child. It is offered within safe, healthy environment using developmentally appropriate equipment and materials, by teachers trained in early childhood education, and with parents as active partners in their child's education."

Statement of Goals and Objectives

The whole child and all areas of development should be considered in defining goals and objectives for each school. These goals are used in planning activities with a specific purpose in mind and regularly assessing each child's progress. The following areas of development encompass the whole child and can be broken down into manageable components that follow a continuum of development.

- **Social/Emotional Development:** These include children's sense of self, understanding of feelings, development of responsibility for self and others, and ability to relate with other children and adults.
- **Cognitive Development:** This focus concentrates on the children's ability to use thinking skills, including problem solving and symbolic skills. In this area children learn how to classify and compare objects, become familiar with numbers and counting, and begin to develop an understanding of time. They learn how to observe events, be persistent in working on a task, explore cause and effect and apply knowledge from one context to another. By taking on pretend roles and playing make believe, they are beginning to develop symbolic thinking.
- **Physical Development:** Young children are developing their gross and fine motor skills. Examples of gross motor skills are activities such as running, jumping, galloping, skipping,

A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove, but the world might be different because I was important in the life of a child.
-Anonymous

climbing, throwing, catching, kicking, and attaining balance. Fine motor development strengthens and controls the muscles in the hands improving eye-hand coordination, and enabling the use of writing tools and scissors.

- **Language Development:** In this area, children develop their ability to communicate through the spoken and written word. Children hear and discriminate sounds, respond to questions and directions, and participate in conversations. Literacy is emerging as children begin to appreciate reading stories, learn the alphabet, and begin to write.
- **Spiritual Development:** In preschool and kindergarten the foundations for faith are laid by providing a loving and healthy environment similar to that of a family. Spiritual development does not happen through religious indoctrination; rather an appropriate environment and activities encourage later religious development. Spiritual development fosters the child's need for self-awareness, confidence, self-expression and self-appreciation. It respects the capabilities of the young child, expresses themes in concrete terms to which children can relate, paraphrases Scripture to the child's level of understanding, avoids pre-drawn art, and provides children with creative activities. When planning liturgies, it is important to remember that the attention span of young children is short. Expecting them to sit for periods of time longer than twenty minutes does not take into account the developmental level of the child.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice⁷

An understanding of developmentally appropriate practice is crucial to the development of the philosophy and goals of an early childhood program. NAEYC defines developmentally appropriate practice as resulting from the process of professionals making decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge:

1. Knowledge about child development and learning
2. Knowledge about the strengths, interests and needs of each individual child in the group
3. Knowledge of social and cultural contexts in which children live.

Simply put, the term “developmentally appropriate practice” means that early childhood teachers base their teaching strategies and plan learning activities using their knowledge of child development as well as what they know about individual children in their group. DAP = age appropriate + individually appropriate. In a developmentally appropriate program, the curriculum fits the child, not the other way around. It is individualized, experiential, interactive, and child-directed. “Academics” and other subjects are integrated into the curriculum, not taught separately, as “specials”, or as whole group activities.

A developmentally appropriate classroom, however, is not unstructured. Teachers don't abdicate their teaching role; instead they act as observers, guides, and facilitators. Teachers plan, set up the environment, and offer learning materials that match the interests of the group as well as individual children's developing skill levels. Goals and objectives address cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth and development because each is equally important in the way young children learn. It also means that teachers work with parents and consider their values and goals for their children.

If we allowed children to show us what they can do rather than merely expecting what they usually do, I feel certain we would be in for some grand surprises.

--Mem Fox

⁷ For more information about DAP refer to *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, NAEYC, Bredekamp & Copple, eds. or contact NAEYC at 1-800-424-2460 or www.naeyc.org

Choosing an appropriate early childhood curriculum

The Illinois State Board of Education does not endorse specific curricula. The following criteria⁸ must be considered by schools in evaluating curricula for use in preschool or kindergarten programs:

- Align with the Illinois Early Learning Standards and Illinois Early Learning Standards for Kindergarten;
- Include significant content to be taught with intentionality and integration;
- Include child initiation and engagement;
- Use clear research-based content based on a systematic and comprehensive review of research of how children learn;
- Provide parent involvement by using curricula that helps build meaningful communication with families;
- Align with an authentic assessment tool that is ongoing and comprehensive;
- Consider the child's linguistic and cultural background;
- Be appropriate for all early childhood teaching staff to implement regardless of their qualifications (certified teacher, paraprofessional);
- Be appropriate for children with a wide range of abilities; and
- Provide research evidence of the model's effectiveness

Different Curriculum Approaches

1. Montessori www.americanmontessorisociety.org
2. Creative Curriculum www.teachingstrategies.com
3. High Scope www.highscope.org
4. Reggio Emilia www.reggioalliance.org
5. Bank Street www.bankstreet.edu
6. Project Approach <http://illinoispip.org>

Curriculum Resources

Preschool Curriculum Decision-Making: Dimensions to Consider by Ellen Frede & Debra Ackerman, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

◀Refer to the Office of Catholic Schools Curriculum on the OCS Resource Portal
<http://ocs.archchicago.org>

⁸ adapted from IL State Board of Education Preschool for All Implementation Manual "Curriculum"

Learning Standards

Learning standards lay the foundation for the curriculum. According to Barbara Bowman, co-founder of the Erikson Institute, one of the country's premier graduate schools in early childhood education, "Standards are an essential first step for designing effective [early childhood] curricula since they represent an agreed upon agenda for teaching and learning. They should be used as the base for reflective teachers as they create learning experiences that build on what children already know and capture their interest in learning."

The Illinois Early Learning Standards and the Illinois Early Learning Standards for Kindergarten, developed by the Illinois State Board of Education, are organized to parallel in content the Illinois Learning Standards for 1-12 education. Included are benchmarks for learning in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Physical Development and Health, Fine Arts, Foreign Language, and Social/Emotional Development.

- To view the Illinois Early Learning Standards, go to www.illinoisearlylearning.org/standards.
- To view the Illinois Early Learning Standards for Kindergarten, go to www.isbe.net/earlychi/ Click on "Kindergarten Corner"
- To view the Common Core Standards, go to <http://corestandards.org/>

Creating the Learning Environment

A thoughtfully planned physical environment is a necessary component of any early childhood program. Surroundings directly affect the emotions, behavior and development of both children and adults, but it is particularly important for the young child. Thoughtful arrangement of the indoor and outdoor environments supports the goals of the program. The amount, arrangement, and use of space, and the quality of the materials used affect the involvement of the children and quality of their interactions. When designing an early childhood classroom, one must consider a variety of elements, such as the organization of materials, the size, texture, and durability of furniture, safety concerns, flexibility, multi-cultural aspects, and family friendliness. Classrooms must be arranged in clearly defined, well-equipped learning centers, which provide the children with the opportunity to make choices, encourage independence, and promote engaged learning.

Learning Centers

Learning centers are spaces and materials designed to support learning. The labeling and organization of learning centers differ in each classroom, due to the size and shape of the room, yet typically an early childhood classroom includes the following learning centers: blocks, dramatic play, art, sand and water, literacy, music and movement, math/manipulative (table toys), science, and outdoors. In many classrooms, learning centers are combined, due to a lack of space. For example, the areas of math, science and sand and water may be combined to create more space for other things. Many times library books, tape recorders with headphones, and computers are all placed in one area. In defining learning centers, keep the following key points in mind:

- Create well-defined learning centers that provide visual boundaries, using furniture, rugs, etc.

The environment directly affects the behavior and development of young children.
- Anonymous

- Separate the quiet and loud areas to support respect for each child’s play.
- Develop a private area for children who may need to be alone.
- Place art, sand and water, and other messy activities near the water supply area.
- Use furniture, chairs, and rugs to clearly identify how many children may play in an area, without becoming crowded.
- Design a large enough space to lead group time and large motor activities.

Organization of Materials

The way in which you organize materials should encourage the children to openly explore the learning centers. When materials are presented in an age appropriate manner, the children build independence, self-esteem, problem solving, literacy, and social abilities. The following are some tips for organizing your materials:

- Store similar materials together.
- Use clear bins and containers so children can see what is inside.
- Label bins and shelves with pictures and words.
- Ensure that materials are easily accessible to the children.
- Create an individual space for each child’s artwork, writing, projects, etc.
- Mount hooks at age appropriate heights for children to hang smocks, dress-up clothes, etc.
- Identify a place to dry, wet artwork.
- Have child-size brooms, dustpans, and wastebaskets available for clean up.
- Develop a space in the room for extra materials storage to prevent the need for the teacher to leave the room for additional materials.
- Provide an adequate number of age-appropriate supplies available.

Furniture

The size, texture, and durability of the classroom furniture must be considered when designing an early childhood classroom. Early childhood furniture is very expensive; therefore one must plan carefully before making a purchase. Also, when designing the classroom, the environment should be functional, interesting, and comfortable. Following are some guidelines:

- Check the height of chairs, tables, shelves, easels, etc. to ensure they are age-appropriate for preschool children, rather than toddlers or grade elementary children.
- Include a variety of textures by incorporating soft carpets, wood furniture, molded plastic, baskets to store materials, etc.
- Purchase high quality furniture that is both very durable and versatile.
- Check before accepting donations, to make sure the donation is appropriate for school use rather than home use and is durable enough to support use by many children.
- Ensure that furniture is stable, does not tip easily, and has rounded corners.
- Choose chairs that are non-porous for easier cleaning.

*I may not be making a living,
but I'm making a difference.*
--Rachel Hickerson

Safety Concerns

Safety must be a focus when designing the classroom. Young children are active, quick, and unpredictable. Many unsafe child behaviors occur due to poor room arrangements. There are many preventive actions that can be taken by planning the environment with safety in mind. Here are a few suggestions:

- Place furniture so that the teacher’s view of the children is never obstructed.
- Avoid open pathways that encourage children to run.
- Keep exits clear of furniture.
- Provide enough space for interactive activities that involve larger groups of children, such as large motor, blocks, and dramatic play.
- Place your water table on a non-slip surface.
- Ensure the floor coverings do not create a tripping hazard.
- Provide a small broom and dustpan to be kept near the sand table to clean up excess sand.

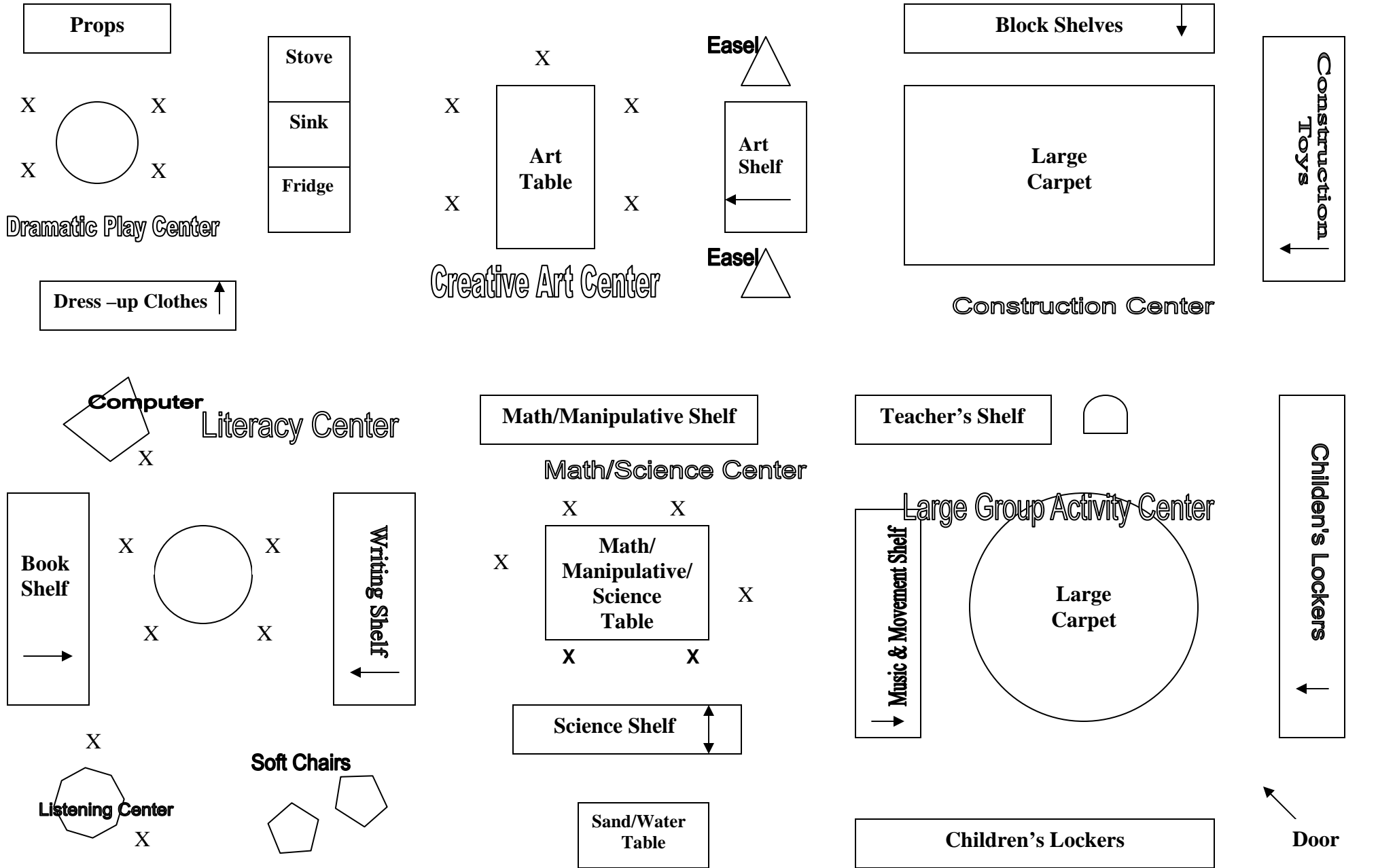
Flexibility

It is important to think of the classroom as a flexible space. During the course of a school year, the space needs of the children change due to their growth and development, seasonal change, and curriculum projects. In the fall, the children need a well, organized, clearly defined classroom so they can learn to use the space appropriately. During the winter, areas may need to be re-designed to include more large motor activity since the weather conditions may keep the children inside more often. By spring, children develop new skills and may need more challenging curriculum projects. Here are some creative ways to approach flexible space.

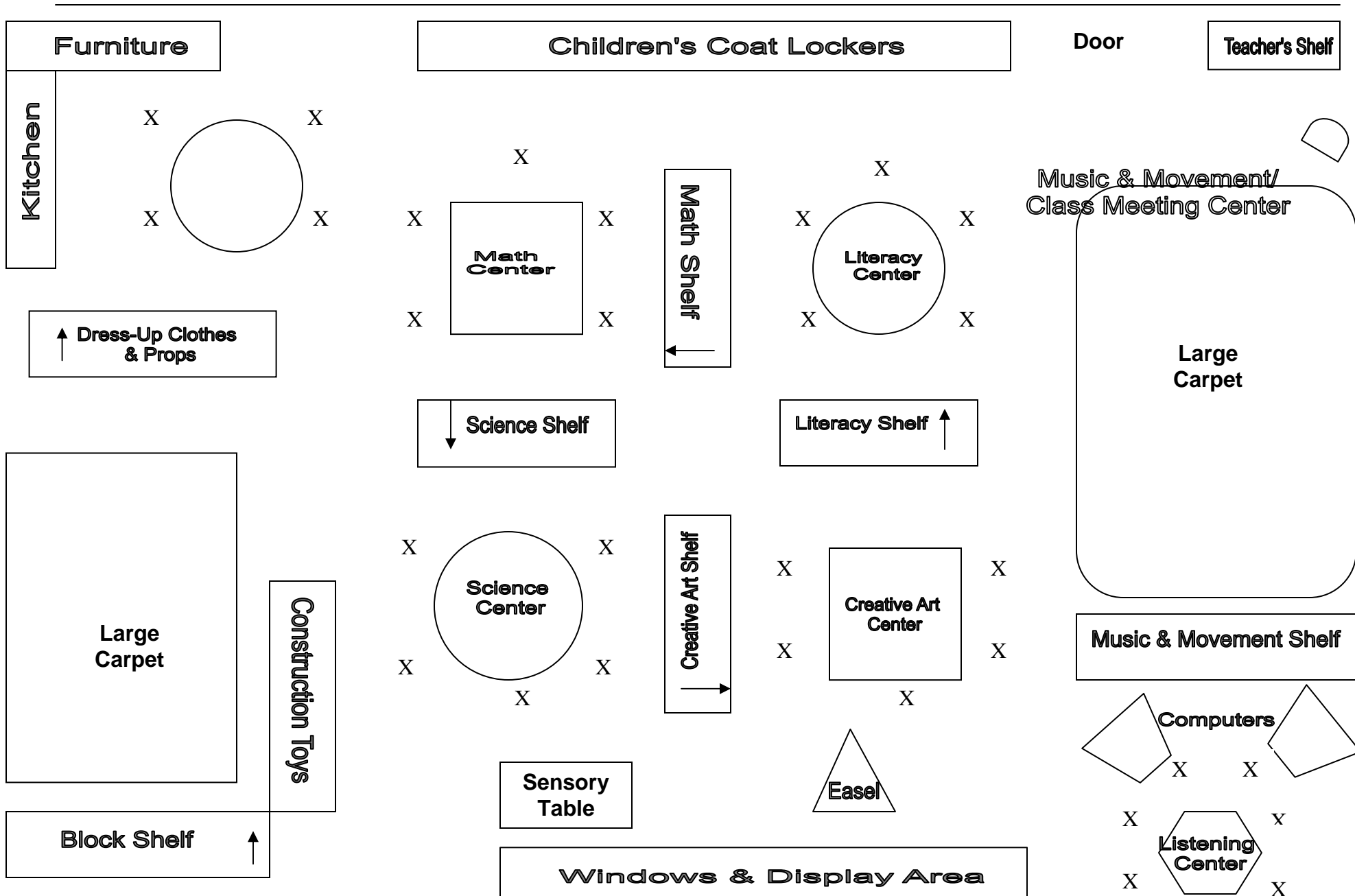
- Rearrange the room to resolve behavioral problems.
- Create a space to store materials and rotate the materials.
- Change your dramatic play from housekeeping to a grocery store, bakery, bus, etc.
- Use a hanging curtain or a tent to create a special space.
- Change your room arrangement during holiday breaks in order to provide a new beginning for the children.
- Combine areas to create larger spaces for special projects such as a stage, science lab, doctor’s office, etc.
- Add special pieces of equipment to enhance the curriculum such as using a reclining chair as a pretend dentist’s chair.

Following are some sample classroom floor plans to help guide teachers in creating effective room arrangements. The following charts show the minimum equipment and materials required by Illinois licensing standards for both preschool and kindergarten rooms. They can be used as a guide for equipping classrooms adequately.

Sample-Preschool Classroom Floor Plan



Sample Kindergarten Classroom Floor Plan



Minimum Equipment & Supplies for Preschool or Kindergarten Classrooms

Adapted from IL Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers & NAEYC Criteria

Date: _____

Name of School _____

Name of Classroom: _____

	Classroom Has	Classroom Needs
Furniture		
Tables and chairs: sufficient tables and chairs with backs for the children (one chair per child) and chairs with backs for staff.		
If children sleep, a mat or cot is needed. If children are resting or lounging, floor pillows, sofa, carpet, bean- bag chairs, padded chairs, mats or cots can be provided.		
One cot with blanket for ill child.		
Shelving – low, open shelves and bookcases with one foot of shelving per child.		
Personal storage space – individual spaces for coats, boots, and personal items.		
Area rug or carpeting for each group, or individual carpet squares or cushions for each child to sit upon.		
Large Muscle – Indoors		
Building blocks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Blocks-wood (standard full or half set and accessories) • 20 large, durable building blocks per each group of ten or fewer children. (Recommended if space allows) 		
2 pieces of durable, large muscle equipment for every group of ten or fewer children; three pieces for groups of 11 to 20 children. (Ex.: climber, rocking boat, tunnel, balance beam, riding toys, tumbling mat.)		
Small Muscle		
Construction – small blocks including blocks which grip or lock together and other blocks which can be used for building. At least 100 pieces per group of ten or fewer children, plus 10 blocks per child for each child over the ten children. (Legos, wooden colored cubes, Tinker Toys, Bristle Blocks, Lincoln Logs)		
Manipulative toys – one for every 3 children. Complex manipulative toys for counting, sorting, sequencing and patterning, such as attribute blocks, geoboards, Unifix Cubes, etc.		
Art materials – clay or other molding material; a variety of papers; non-toxic paints (tempera, finger paint, water colors) and brushes; paste or glue, scissors, and tape; markers, crayons, and colored pencils; collage/construction materials; and aprons or smocks.		

Easels –Two easels or one double easel for each group of 20 or fewer children. (Recommended if space allows)		
Puzzles – A variety of complex table and floor puzzles with 25 – 100 pieces. Include literacy, science, & math concepts.		
Social/Expressive/ Language Development		
Dramatic play – A <i>variety</i> of dramatic play materials and props. Examples are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural dolls; doll bed • Kitchen set (stove and/or sink, and/or refrigerator, and/or cupboard) with pots, pans, dishes, etc. • At least 5 transportation toys of any size, with pretend road, buildings, etc. (May be used in block area) • Puppet theater, play store (include props to support dramatic play themes) • Dollhouse with props • Dress up clothes • Barn with accessories • Telephones and cash registers • Sand or water table (dish pans acceptable) with accessories (scoops, buckets, measuring materials, funnels, plastic tubes and pipes.) • Woodworking bench & tools (if space and appropriate supervision is available) 		
Music items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythm band or other group of instruments to be played by children (one instrument for every two children is required, however one instrument for every child is recommended during large group activities) • One CD player per group with at least ten CDs. • Listening center with accessories is recommended. 		
Literacy Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flannel board/Velcro board—one board per group with accessories • Language development pictures • Writing materials – paper, pencils, pens, markers, letter stencils, stamps and stamp pads, envelopes, staplers, etc. Book making materials such as hole punch, yarn. 		
Cognitive Development		
Science items – five science items per group of ten or fewer children, plus one for every two additional children in groups larger than 10. Examples include magnets, magnifying glasses, animals suitable for classroom, plants, items for measurement (scales, measuring tape, rulers, timers, clocks, thermometer), simple machines (levers, pulleys, gears), natural objects (shells, rocks, feathers), globe, binoculars, microscope etc.		
Books – at least 20 books per group of ten or fewer children, plus two books per child for groups larger than ten. A variety of books that include		

early readers, multicultural stories, poetry, picture dictionary, & child encyclopedias.		
Cognitive games – five cognitive games to teach number concepts, letter shapes, size and color concepts per group of ten or fewer children, plus one game for every two children in groups larger than ten. Games such as Candy Land, Sorry, Connect Four, Jr. versions of Monopoly, Scrabble etc. Card games such as Uno, Rummy, and Fish		
Religion		
Small table or shelf for a prayer center; cross, children’s bible, statues, etc. Items to coincide with the liturgical year (Advent wreath), Holy Days (book of saints) or special month (May/October-rosary). See “Godly Play” for resources and materials.		
Large Muscle – Outdoors		
Large equipment Two items for every 20 or fewer children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climber (on a large climber with several sections, each section counts as one item), • Slide • Sand Box • Building Blocks/Pieces (set of 40 large blocks), • Water Play Equipment (Outdoor water table, buckets & brushes, Hose, Sprinkler, etc.) 		
Medium Equipment One item for every ten or fewer children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheel toys (tricycle, wagon, etc.) • Balance beam, rocking boat, tunnel, etc. • T-ball stand, parachute, bowling set, plastic cones, basketball hoop 		
Small Equipment One item for every seven or fewer children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balls for a variety of sports, jump ropes, hula hoops, Frisbees, beanbags, ring toss, etc. • Consumable materials: chalk, bubbles, water colors, etc. 		

Note: Indoor large muscle equipment should be counted and used as outdoor equipment, if playground equipment is not available outdoors.

Programs which operate for three hours per day or less and provide outdoor play, programs which carry equipment to a remote outdoor play area and programs with playgrounds serving fewer than 20 children may substitute for the large equipment as follows: one medium equipment item for every 3 children, plus one small equipment item for every seven children or one small equipment item for each child.

Note: Remember to include multicultural items and materials if classrooms have very few or none of these kinds of materials.

The Teacher's Role

Establishing the Educational Approach

Having established goals and objectives and a physical environment that supports those goals, the educational approach connects content, teaching, and learning. How the curriculum is planned and implemented by the staff requires careful observation and reflection of the children's interactions with materials and each other, the teaching staff's interactions with the children, planning of experiences, use of materials, and ongoing assessment. The staff employs teaching strategies that meet the particular needs and interests of their group. In order to do this, staff must be aware of content (as defined by the State of Illinois Early Learning Standards), choose the specific developmental goals they want to achieve, and use a lesson plan format that includes all learning centers/areas. Teachers guide and facilitate learning using their professional expertise; knowledge of developmental stages of children, and the individual needs and interests of the specific group. (The Creative Curriculum by Diane Trister Dodge is a resource that provides the continuum of developmental learning with specific goals and a curriculum framework as described above.)

Teacher aides are also integral to a quality early childhood program. Sufficient adults enhance safety, provide for more opportunities for adult/children interactions, and make it possible to provide an interactive, child-centered curriculum. Therefore, teachers and their aides must work closely together to carry out the curriculum. They should be involved in planning together and should share the chores in the classroom. Teachers need to clearly communicate their expectations to their assistants and take responsibility for creating a good working relationship. Assistants must have many opportunities to give their input about the program and participate in all aspects of the curriculum as they feel comfortable. In good early childhood classrooms it is hard to tell which person is the teacher and which is the aide.

Developing Relationships with Children

The relationships that children have with the adults in the classroom greatly impact their experience in the program. Teachers can develop good relationships with children through their interactions with them. Interactions between adults and

children and among children have great significance in an early childhood classroom. Quality interactions that children have with adults and that adults facilitate among children aid in the development of self-esteem, social competence, and intellectual growth. The level of children's social competence is a better predictor of future success in school and adulthood than is IQ, school grades, or classroom behavior (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning www.casel.org). Children are challenged in their cognitive development through their interactions with adults and other children. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to ensure that interactions within the classroom help all children become socially competent and encourage intellectual growth.

Children will teach us how to reach them if we tune in to what delights them, intrigues them, makes them laugh. What we need to learn above all is to "hang out" with children.

--Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld

Teacher's Interactions -Teachers should interact with children throughout the day, greeting them individually as they arrive and acknowledging them as they leave at the end of the day. Teachers should rotate around the classroom to talk with children as they are working and

sit and converse with them during meals and snacks. When talking with children, teachers should get down on their level and listen with attention and respect.

Interactions between teachers and children should be frequent, warm, and responsive. Teachers should talk with children in a friendly, positive, and courteous way. A teacher's voice should be pleasant and should not be louder than the sounds of children's voices. The sound of the classroom should be cheerful with conversations of children, excited exclamations, and laughter. Young children should not be required to be quiet during a majority of the day. Teachers should speak with individual children as much as possible instead of focusing on many large group activities. Young children gain more in their learning and development through individual and small group activities. Teachers should respond to children's requests by looking at them and answering them with direct eye contact.

Acknowledging Children -Teachers can acknowledge children in many ways throughout the day. When children are having difficulty or feeling upset, teachers should take time to listen to what is wrong and let the child know they hear them and understand. Often something as simple as acknowledging emotions with a simple statement such as "I'm sorry you are feeling sad" or "I know it is hard to wait" is helpful for children. Teachers should focus on acknowledging what children do, say, and feel. Many times teachers use non-specific praise such as "Great job!" or "I like the way you did that." It is more effective to notice something specific about children to ensure that praise is not overused. Teachers can say such things as "I see you are building with blocks", "You filled up the whole page with paint", "I'm glad you had fun with your grandma last night", "It hurts when you fall down", etc. These simple comments let children know that you are seeing and hearing them and let them know that they are important. Frequent and empty praise may lower self-confidence.

Interactions that help children learn -Throughout the day teachers should seek to engage children in open-ended conversations and ask children questions that cannot be answered with "yes" or "no" or one or two words. Teachers need to ask questions that do not necessarily have a correct answer and require children to think in a variety of ways. Questions such as "What do you think will happen if . . . ?" or "What are some ways we could do that?" are only two examples of open-ended questions. It is much more important to ask open-ended questions than closed questions. Therefore, it might be helpful for teachers to think about the kinds of questions they want to ask as they plan their day and write them down until they become comfortable with and proficient at asking open-ended questions.

Teachers should also expand children's thinking by posing problems, and making comments and suggestions that foster children's thinking and expand their learning and development. Teachers can expose children to new experiences and ideas. Teachers must also be aware of new skills that children are ready to learn and challenge them with those skills and help them acquire them. These may include cutting with scissors, counting objects, and finding names on a class chart.

Understanding children as individuals - As teachers interact with children, it is important to be aware of what is developmentally appropriate for the child's age. Teachers should encourage children to cooperate, help, take turns, and talk to solve problems, while being cognizant of what they are capable, given their age and developmental level. Positive interactions with children build self-esteem. As teachers respond to children throughout the day, give them choices, create many child-initiated opportunities, and encourage children to

solve their own problems; they will increase children's abilities to interact with and get along with others.

Classroom Management

In addition to planning a program that is developmentally appropriate and ensuring quality interactions with children, teachers are responsible for effectively managing their classrooms. Classroom management includes attention to discipline and good transitions. As noted in *NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice*:

"Teachers facilitate the development of social skills, self-control, and self-regulation in children by using positive guidance techniques, such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to more acceptable activities, setting clear limits and intervening to enforce consequences for unacceptable, harmful behavior. Teachers' expectations respect children's developing capabilities. Teachers are patient, realizing that not every minor infraction warrants a response." (Second Edition, p. 129)

Discipline – What Is It? How Do I Do It?

Discipline is training in self-control, peaceful problem solving, cooperation, and empathy. Its purpose is to help the children gain the skills they need to be healthy individuals and productive citizens. Discipline should never be punitive. The three components of good discipline are education, reward, and consequences.

1. **Education:** Teachers establish positively stated goals or guidelines and are firm and consistent in ensuring that children understand and follow them. Guidelines such as "Use walking feet", "Clean up or "Use words to solve problems" are simple and tell children what to do. Teachers will need to talk about these goals often in language that is clear and direct and that the child can understand. All references to goals or expectations should be done with a supportive tone of voice and with a solid understanding of child development. Misbehavior should be defined in terms of what impact the behavior has on the successful development of the child, not on what annoys the adults in the room.
2. **Reward:** Praise is the best reward. We frequently do a better job of getting children to do what is expected by rewarding them for the positive things they do instead of punishing for negative behaviors. It's important to use specific praise and to identify what the child is being praised for, i.e., "I like the way you asked Jose for the blocks today" is more helpful than simply saying, "Nice job". Rewards should be given when the child has done or has tried to do what is expected. Teachers should praise children individually and privately or use group praise when the whole group is following classroom guidelines.
3. **Consequences:** Any consequences given to children should be fair and suited to the misbehavior. Many discipline techniques such as time out, public praise of individuals, and scolding can cause children to feel that they are not welcome in the classroom or cannot contribute to the group. These techniques have little educational value and frequently create resentment in children. Instead the teacher should separate the child from the group, get down to the child's eye level and discuss the misbehavior, giving the child ideas for ways to behave appropriately and helping them plan how to handle the situation the next time it occurs.

Goals of discipline

Helping children manage their own behavior: During preschool and kindergarten, children are increasingly developing self-control and an understanding of appropriate behavior. They need teachers to gently remind them of what is acceptable and why. Children will be more motivated to follow rules and expectations if they understand them. As children are encouraged to look at something from another perspective and challenged to think about how others may feel, they become more empathetic and behave in more pro-social ways.

Helping children solve their own problems: Children can learn to solve their own problems if teachers consistently encourage them to do so and support them in their efforts. Teachers should help children to think about problems and encourage them to evaluate how to solve them, rather than imposing a solution for the children. Teachers should help children solve conflicts with one another by encouraging children to talk about what the problem is and decide what could be done to solve it. It is also important for teachers to acknowledge children's anger, sadness and frustrations and respond to them with respect. It is helpful for teachers to help children learn to express their emotions and learn to verbalize what they are feeling and what their ideas are. Teachers need to be clear and specific in communicating expectations so that children understand what they need to do.

Helping children become more independent: As children are able, teachers should encourage them to take care of themselves by doing things such as putting away toys, cleaning up spills, washing hands, toileting, and caring for materials. Teachers must be patient with young children who are just learning to do these things, but need many opportunities to practice in order to acquire the skills. As children are encouraged to take care of themselves, they develop the self-regulation that is vital to functioning in society.

Discipline Do's

- Establish routines and rules at the beginning of the year. Once a lack of control gets entrenched, it is difficult to correct the situation.
- Have a developmentally appropriate curriculum with a schedule that acknowledges the needs of children and engages them in activities that allow them to explore and socialize while learning through play.
- Include character education in the curriculum through circle time activities, stories, and religious instruction. Focus on pro-social behaviors like sharing, taking turns, listening, discussing the meaning of friends and friendships, and demonstrating respect in age appropriate ways.
- When unacceptable behaviors occur, look for causes.
 - First, investigate - Is the child ill? Overly tired? Hungry?
 - Second, look at the classroom. Is the overall environment chaotic? Are there too few or too many choices? Are transitions smooth? (see section on Transitions)
 - Third, look the child's family situation? Is there a new baby, a divorce, or a death in the family?
- Reflect on situations that seem to produce misbehavior. What events preceded the misbehavior? Is this a regular misbehavior or an isolated incident? How is this behavior a problem for the children involved?

- Stay calm. When you handle the situation in a positive way, children can trust you to help them behave well and know that you are in control even when they are not.
- Work cooperatively with other adults in the room. Children are very sensitive to the emotional climate of the room. If the adults are at odds, it causes stress for children, which may lead the children to act out with negative behaviors.

Discipline Don'ts

- Do not use threats. It is not appropriate to threaten the loss of gym, play time, or field trips to get a child to behave well. All children are to be included in these activities and depriving a child of them should not be used as punishment.
- Do not raise your voice. A loud voice is frightening to children. It indicates a situation that is out-of-control. Children need the adults in their world to be in control. Losing your temper is losing control.
- Physical punishments are never permitted.
- Belittling remarks to a child are never appropriate.
- Intimidation is never appropriate.

*There is no job easier than
teaching if you don't care –
and no job harder if you do.*
-LeMay Smith

Creating Effective Transitions

Times of transition can create chaos or can provide children with opportunities for learning and reinforcing concepts or skills. Transitions that are smooth contribute to positive classroom management and provide opportunities for children to practice social skills. The following excerpt from *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* offers several suggestions for ways to make transitions pleasant experiences for children and adults:

- **Individualize the process.** As much as possible, teachers should avoid moving the whole group from one activity to the next. For example as individual children finish their snack they can quietly read a book on the rug. Or, when about half the children are ready to go outdoors, one teacher can take the group while the other teacher brings the next group out when they are ready.
- **Give children notice that a transition is coming.** Children respond to a change much better if they are prepared for it. Five to ten minutes before clean-up time, talk to the children in each interest area: “You have time for one more puzzle” or “There is just enough time to finish that painting but not to start a new one.”
- **Allow sufficient time.** Treat clean-up time as an experience that is valuable in and of itself, and allow enough time for clean-up so children won't feel rushed.
- **Assign children tasks.** Involve children in setting up for a snack or lunch, cleaning up after art, and collecting trash after a meal. This not only smoothes the transition but also teaches children responsibility and self-reliance.
- **Provide an activity for children to do as they wait.** As children come to the rug for a large group activity, one teacher should join them once there are five or more children and do songs or finger plays with the children as they wait for the others to join them.
- **Be clear and consistent.** Children need very clear directions during times of transition. Expectations of children should be age-appropriate and clearly communicated. Routines should be consistent so that children know what to do.

- **Be flexible.** When possible, allow children extra time to complete special projects or activities in which they are particularly involved. For example, if several of the children have spent all of free play building a “city” and need time to complete it, allow them this extra time. Or help them to put it in a safe place where they can finish it later. Other children can be asked to help clean up while this is happening.
- **Keep the next activity in mind.** Provide transitions that prepare for the upcoming activity. If children are transitioning to a quiet activity, use a calm and relaxing transition activity. When children transition to naps, a story may be read as children relax and quiet music may be used to help children become calm. Also, allow children to use individual sleep toys that are stored in their cubbies or special blankets from home to make the transition to nap time easier.

When you are having problems, ask for help. Letting the situation get out of hand is not good for the teacher or for the children. If the adults in the classroom are not having fun and enjoying the day, it is hard to create a positive environment for children.

The Daily Schedule

The daily schedule establishes the basic structure for each day. If the developmental and individual needs of the children are taken into account, an appropriate daily schedule helps create an enjoyable day for everyone. The needs of children to learn through hands-on experiences and play dictate that the most important part of the day, at least one hour, is spent in free choice of learning centers. This time should never be shortchanged because of the need to fit other activities into the day. Planning is vital for creating experiences for children that are enriching and challenging. Effective planning allows teachers to be aware of what is going on in the classroom, evaluate its effectiveness and make changes when necessary.

An appropriate daily schedule for young children should include a balance of the following:

- Active and quiet times
- Large group, small group, and individual activities
- Indoor and outdoor or small and large muscle activities
- Child-initiated and teacher directed activities (with limited teacher directed activities)

When planning the daily schedule teachers should take into account the importance of transitions and routines and provide adequate time for them. Some or all of the following routines should be part of the daily schedule:

- Arrival and departure
- Meals and snacks
- Sleeping or resting
- Toileting, dressing, and washing hands
- Clean-up
- Transitions between activities

The daily schedule should provide consistency. When children know what will happen each day, they feel more secure. They delight in predicting what happens next. A consistent schedule provides them with a sense of time as they begin to understand the sequence of events. Predictability also helps children build trust in their environment and relationships

with others. Finally, while consistency is important it is also vital that teachers are flexible enough to change planned routines when special things happen or when children's behavior shows that they need something different.

Children need enough time to complete routine tasks such as putting on coats and hats, eating meals or snacks or cleaning up while also ensuring that children do not have to wait long. The daily schedule should also provide adequate time for children to choose their own activities and work on them. Large group times should be kept to 10-20 minutes for preschool and no longer than 30 minutes for kindergarten and should include activities that build a sense of community such as story time, sharing with one another, solving a problem, or other activities where all children contribute to the group.

A daily schedule should be posted in the room. Teachers provide a schedule that children can easily read by illustrating each time period with pictures or photographs of the children during those times. The sample daily schedules that follow provide a guideline, which can be modified to meet the needs of the early childhood program. It is important to remember that prayer should be included when appropriate. Prayers will be said before meals and snacks and may also be said at other times during the day when teachers find that it helps children further their spiritual development and understanding.

The following sample schedules are based on an 8:00 am – 3:00 pm school day.

Sample Daily Schedule for Preschool

Arrival and Greeting: Children put coats and other materials in cubby or locker. Children select quiet activities set out on tables such as puzzles, table toys, books, or drawing materials	15 min.
Circle Time/Morning Meeting: Good morning songs, prayers, conversations about events and experiences, emotions, rules, etc., discussion of day's activities. Introduction of theme or topic.	15-20 min
Center Time/ Free Choice Play: Children choose activities from learning centers. <i>Teachers use this time to work with children in small groups on a variety of projects or skills.</i>	1 hour
Clean Up/Hand washing and Snack: (If possible, teacher may elect to have open, free-choice snack during center time, rather than set aside a period for this purpose. Center time would be extended)	15-20 min.
Music and Movement: Sing with children, use rhythm instruments, or follow instructions of movement songs on tape or CD.	15-20 min.
Large Group Activity: Story, finger plays.	10-15 min.
Outdoor Play/ Large Muscle Indoor Play	20-30 min.
Bathroom, Hand washing, Preparing for Lunch	10-15 min.
Lunch	30 min.

Clean-up, Prepare for Nap/Rest (Bathroom/Handwashing)	5-10 min.
Nap/Rest	1 hour
Wake Up (Put Cots/ Mats Away)	10-15 min.
Individual Quiet Activities: Looking at books, drawing/writing, puzzles.	15-20 min
Large Group Activity: Story, finger plays. Wrap-up of day.	10-15 min.
Preparation for Dismissal/ Dismissal	5-15 min.

Half-day programs can use the suggested schedule until lunchtime. Children who do not stay all day could be dismissed at that time. Both the full and half day schedule should include at least one hour of free choice/center play. If children participate in a special subject such as music, gym, library, etc. they need to be scheduled so that children have adequate time for self-selected activities. Better yet, bring the “specials” to the children or keep them to a minimum.

Sample Daily Kindergarten Schedule

The suggested order of activities below is flexible and times are approximate. The schedule includes two whole group times to allow for concept instruction and two focused small group activity periods to allow children to work with the concept taught and to practice other skills. Another option would be to have an ample period of time for learning centers in the morning. During this time teachers can incorporate small group time where they can focus on specific skills or new concepts with targeted groups of children. While some children are working with teachers in small groups the rest of the class is participating in various hands on learning activities throughout the classroom. Teachers may also want to have some “must do” centers throughout the week to ensure that children are practicing skills that are being taught. Children can check off their names on a class list or sign in to show they have worked in those centers.

During group times teachers may want to focus on literacy and math skills while integrating science and social studies into the curriculum through center activities and books that are read. Children are more alert and ready to learn new concepts earlier in the day; therefore, teachers may want to plan literacy and math activities earlier in the day and offer more open/free choice centers later. What is important is that children are spending limited time as a whole group learning new concepts and having many opportunities for child-initiated, hands on activities. Both teachers and aides are always involved in activities with children in whole or small groups and free choice/learning center times.

The following schedule is based on a 6-hour school day. It can be adjusted accordingly.

Arrival—Limited Choice Activities: Time needs to be allowed for children to put coats and materials in lockers, coat room or cubbies. Children could spend a few minutes at the beginning of the day drawing and writing in journals about topics of their own choosing as a transition to the school day. 10-15 min.

Opening—Whole Group Math Activity: Morning meeting and routines. Introduction or review of new math concepts. 20-30 min.

Focused Small Group Math Activities: Children work in centers to practice various concepts being addressed. For example teachers offer children different centers which would all be related to math—either as practice of new concept taught or to review math concepts in general.	30 min.
Bathroom/Hand washing	10 min.
Snack: Teacher may elect to have open, free choice snack as a center rather than set aside a period for this purpose.	15-20 min.
Whole Group Literacy Activity: Teacher works with the group to introduce or review concepts related to literacy. Teacher may read a book related to science or social studies and discuss new vocabulary and the ideas from the book. The class may participate in a shared writing activity or engage in phonemic awareness activities, etc.	20-30 min.
Focused Small Group Literacy Activities: As above, children work in learning centers to practice new literacy concepts or practice other ones. All activities from which children can choose are literacy related. Teachers may use the first 10 min of this time for journal writing. Children may respond to the story read at group time or draw and write about a topic they choose.	30 min.
Outdoor (Gross Motor) Play	20-30 min.
Bathroom / Hand Washing	10 min.
Lunch	30 min.
Bathroom / Hand Washing / Rest: Kindergarten children are not required to sleep. However they should have some “down time” in order to relax and refresh for afternoon activities. Cots or mats should be provided for those children who need to nap. Floor pillows, padded chairs can be provided for lounging or resting.	45 min.
Music and Movement: Sing with children, listen to music, use rhythm instruments, and dance or engage in creative movements.	20 min.
Center Time - Free Choice and/or Individualized Learning: Children are allowed to use any center in the room according to interest and social relationship choices or to finish projects. Teacher can choose learning center activities for children as extra practice or work one-on-one with children who can benefit from additional learning support.	30 min.
Wrap Up / Whole Group Meeting: Review of activities of the day, plan for tomorrow, questions and discussion.	15-20 min.
Preparation for Dismissal / Dismissal	10 min.

Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is important for every early childhood classroom. The planning process should include long-range and short-range goals as well as daily goals. Long-range goals address areas of learning and development for the school year. Short-range goals relate to thematic units or individual projects in which a class may be involved. Daily goals refer to what teachers want to accomplish with children on a daily basis. Lesson planning is a tool to help teachers implement their goals and objectives for children.

Whoever wants to be admired at a festival, should be prepared to dance well.

--Ibo Proverb

Lesson plans must describe what happens each day during large group times, small-group activities, and with individual children during free-choice time. Lesson plans should be well formatted, clear in content, and detailed. Quality lesson plans include all of the following:

- Teacher directed activities for large-group times and small-group activities
- Activities that teachers plan with individual children
- Adequate time for children to be involved in free-choice activities
- A flow of quiet and active work and play experiences which match the developmental needs of children
- Specific activities planned for outdoor or large motor time
- Objectives for children based on themes/units and skill-focused learning activities
- Evidence of hands-on experiences in religion, problem solving and experimentation, language and literacy, sensory experiences, child-initiated art with open-ended media, and activities to enhance social/emotional well-being and respect cultural diversity
- Regularly scheduled activities relating to health, safety, nutrition, and environmental awareness

Both teachers and aides should be involved in lesson planning and contribute to the planning process. The following steps are helpful in lesson planning.

- Review the monthly school calendar for special activities.
- Consider your school program goals and priorities
- Review the Illinois Early Learning Standards and Kindergarten Standards to ensure that the planned activities match the children's developmental skills and levels.
- Include activities that children do daily, such as free choice time, and indicate changes to areas from week to week.
- Take individual needs of children into account. Teachers can indicate how to meet those needs by writing children's initials and describing what activities will enhance development in areas that are challenging.
- Include skill-focused activities that are developmentally appropriate and that can be used with small groups either during free-choice time or a specified small group time.
- Choose activities that match the current theme or project.
- Gather the special materials needed to implement the lesson plan for the following week. A list of items could be generated and the responsibility for obtaining them could be split among teachers and aides.

Using Themes or Projects

Themes or units of study are very effective in driving the curriculum and keeping teachers and children involved and interested in learning. Using themes can help guide teacher in lesson planning.

What is a theme?

Themes are broad topics. Teachers select topics they believe to be relevant and of interest to the children, then build a variety of activities around the central topic. The activities are usually integrated into the different areas of the curriculum, including art, literacy, math, science, social studies, and physical, social, and emotional development. Teachers collect and present resources that will help children gain new awareness about the topic and generalize their knowledge and skills from one experience to another.

How is a theme developed?

1. **Choose a Theme:** Themes should relate to children's real-life, observable experiences, and should build on their current knowledge. (Themes such as dinosaurs or outer space are difficult because they are not observable, concrete, or related to real-life experiences.) Successful themes are broad, rather than narrow, so the curriculum can expand and grow with the children's interests. The theme should lend itself to several curriculum areas and available resources. The theme content needs to be adequately researched and conveyed to children through hands-on experience.
2. **Brainstorm:** The teachers brainstorm and document their experience, knowledge, and ideas relating to the topic. The teachers also lead the children in a discussion to investigate what the children know about the topic. In this discussion, the teacher not only asks the children what they know about the topic, but also what they would like to learn. All of the children's responses are documented on chart paper. Some teachers simply list ideas, while others organize the ideas into a curriculum web. This information will be used when developing the curriculum plan.
3. **Develop a Curriculum Plan:** Using your lesson plan format, begin mapping out when you will be introducing specific concepts, materials, and questions. Discussions may be planned for large group time, while exploration of materials and investigations may be integrated into learning centers. A theme is usually planned to last approximately two weeks, yet can easily develop into a longer time frame, depending on the children's depth of interest. It is important to be flexible and follow the children's lead. If they are not interested, move on to a different theme. If their curiosity drives the theme forward, stay with it as long as interest is sustained. Each theme will be unique in terms of time spent and concepts learned.
4. **Identify Goals:** As the curriculum plans begin to unfold, start to identify specific learning goals and objectives for the children. The goals and objectives should relate to your program assessment tools, the Illinois Early Learning Standards, the IL Kindergarten Standards and Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Identifying specific goals is an important step. It will enable you to provide concrete information regarding the skills and concepts learned from your curriculum plan.
5. **Collect Resources:** Begin gathering resources that will support your theme. Resources include real objects for exploration, books, and experts. Reach out to community resources such as museums and people with special knowledge.
6. **Implementation and Culmination:** Once your plan and goals have taken shape, begin implementing your curriculum. Remember that learning is a collaborative effort. Your interactions should be focused on finding answers to questions posed by either

the child or the teacher. As the children explore the theme, collect work samples to study their understanding of the concepts. A culminating event can be planned at the end of the theme. This provides an opportunity for the children to share what they have learned and bring closure to the theme. This event could be a display of children's work with explanations, a drama, music or movement, representation or a special field trip. Parents or other children in the school may be invited to celebrate the children's learning.

The Project Approach

The Project Approach is a method of teaching in which an in-depth study of a particular topic is conducted by a child or group of children. The Project Approach is incorporated into the curriculum, but does not always constitute the entire curriculum. The Approach consists of three phases:

Phase 1

The first phase of a project that includes coming to agreement on the general topic to be investigated; summarizing, representing, or recording what the children know or think about the topic; revisiting their past experiences related to the topic; formulating the questions to be answered; and making predictions of what the answers might be and where the necessary information can be obtained.

Phase 2

The period when the children are collecting the data they need to answer the questions developed in Phase 1. It includes site visits, interviewing relevant experts, conducting surveys, distributing questionnaires, and other ways of gathering and representing pertinent data. A variety of media are often used by children to represent and report their growing knowledge and understandings of the topic through art, model making, music, play, and verbal expression.

Phase 3

The final phase of a project, during which the children and teachers examine and reflect upon what they have found out from their investigation, and plan and conduct reports of the project for others to hear about and examine. A culminating event is often the conclusion of Phase 3.

Information about the Project Approach and how to get started can be found at

<http://illinoispi.org>

<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/eearchive/digests/1994/lk-pro94.html>

www.projectapproach.org

Tip sheets about the Project Approach can be found at <http://www.illinoisearlylearning.org>

Project Approach Resources:

The Power of Projects: Meeting Contemporary Challenges in Early Childhood Classrooms-Strategies and Solutions, edited by Judy Harris Helms and Sallee Beneke. Teachers College Press, 2003

Young Investigators: The Project Approach in the Early Years, 2nd ed. by Judy Harris Helms and Lilian Katz. Teachers College Press, 2011.

Following are lesson planning forms and a checklist to help evaluate lesson planning for the classroom.

Planning Checklist

LESSON PLANS

- 1. Lesson plan provides a balance of adult-directed and child-initiated hands-on experiences.
- 2. Lesson plan shows that child-initiated time equals or predominates over adult-directed time excluding time for routines.
- 3. Lesson plans document the following
 - a. child activity time for children
 - b. several large-group times of short duration
 - c. short small-group times either as scheduled or clearly seen during free choice time
- 4. Outdoor play time is seen on the lesson plan and takes place daily whenever possible
- 5. Documentation of individualizing is seen on the lesson plan and actually takes place each day
- 6. Lesson plan shows that children are exploring and experimenting, and are attaining mastery with hands-on experiences and discovery learning
- 7. Planned experiences provide both success and appropriate challenge to children
- 8. Art and sensory experiences are open-ended
- 9. Health and dental education experiences (other than routines) are planned regularly and are integrated in varied ways and areas of the setting
- 10. Safety education experiences are regularly integrated and seen in the lesson plans
- 11. Anti-bias and diversity experiences are seen in the daily lesson plans
- 12. Environmental awareness activities are regularly seen in the lesson plans
- 13. A variety of literacy experiences are seen in the daily lesson plans

SETTING

- 1. Children have personal, identified space
- 2. Children's art and work are posted at their eye level and predominate over teacher-made or purchased items
- 3. Photos of the children are posted at their eye level
- 4. The setting encourages safe, self-directed movement and choice-making
- 5. Materials and equipment are safe and clean
- 6. There is an attractive and clearly defined parent information area
- 7. All required documents and emergency plans are posted
- 8. If group rules are posted, they have been developed jointly with children and are stated positively
- 9. Learning programs are easily defined and are labeled in some manner
- 10. Active, noisy areas are separated from quiet areas
- 11. There are ample supplies and a variety of developmentally appropriate materials

OBSERVABLE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

- 1. A variety of materials in various areas support the current theme or unit
- 2. Self-esteem-building experiences occur regularly
- 3. Family-focused activities occur regularly
- 4. Ample and varied choices of appropriate materials are available in each learning area
- 5. Use of the following areas occurs daily in a free-choice period
 - a. sensory—sand, water, other
 - b. blocks—unit, hollow, other construction
 - c. art—easel and other paint, clays, collage, and drawing materials
 - d. dramatic play—housekeeping, puppets, other
 - e. motor—fine and gross motor materials/equipment
 - f. literacy—writing materials, computer, literature, tapes or listening program
 - g. science/math—tools, items to handle and count, plants, animals
 - h. music/movement—instruments and AV media

Sample Preschool Lesson Plan

COMPLETED BY: _____ WEEK OF: _____

SPECIAL FOCUS/THEME: _____

GOALS OBJECTIVES (relate to Learning Standards)	ACTIVITIES	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	LANGUAGE/ GROUP TIME (Stories, Songs, Games)					
	SPECIAL ACTIVITIES (Field Trips, Small Group Activities)					
	OUTDOOR/ GROSS MOTOR					
	DRAMATIC PLAY	WRITING/ STORY DICTATION		ART/CREATIVITY		SAND AND WATER
CHANGES TO THE ENVIRON- MENT (Include Multicultural Materials In All Areas)						
	BLOCKS	MANIPULATIVES	LIBRARY/COMPUTER	MUSIC/MOVEMENT		
INDIVIDUALIZATION/SPECIAL NEEDS OR INTERESTS OF CHILDREN				VOLUNTEERS		

Sample Preschool Lesson Plan (page 2)

TEACHER _____ THEME: _____ WEEK OF: _____

GOALS & OBJECTIVES: _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
LANGUAGE/ GROUP TIME (Stories, Songs, Games)					
SPECIAL ACTIVITIES (Trips, Small Group Activities)					
OUTDOOR/ GROSS MOTOR					
CENTERS Relevant changes to the following areas: BLOCKS DRAMATIC MANIPULATIVES, ART SAND & WATER LITERACY MUSIC & MOVEMENT COMPUTER SCIENCE (At least 6 centers will be open daily for children to interact with materials)					
INDIVIDUALIZATION/SPECIAL NEEDS OR INTERESTS OF CHILDREN:					

Sample Kindergarten Lesson Plan

TEACHER _____ THEME: _____ WEEK OF: _____

GOALS & OBJECTIVES: _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
WHOLE GROUP MATH ACTIVITY					
FOCUSED SMALL GROUP MATH ACTIVITIES					
WHOLE GROUP LITERACY ACTIVITY					
FOCUSED SMALL GROUP LITERACY ACTIVITIES (MUST DO CENTERS)					
OUTDOOR/ GROSS MOTOR					
MUSIC & MOVEMENT					
SPECIALACTIVITES (Specials, Field Trips, Guests, Celebrations)					

<p>FREE CHOICE CENTERS Relevant changes to the following areas: BLOCKS DRAMATIC MANIPULATIVES ART SAND/WATER LITERACY MUSIC/MOVEMENT COMPUTER SCIENCE (At least 6 centers open daily. Specify center and changes to it)</p>					
<p>NOTES: (Reminders, notes, children to observe, children to work with)</p>					
<p>FAMILY/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</p>					
<p>TO DO:</p>					

Bringing the Curriculum Alive

The curriculum section of this handbook (with the exception of “Catholic Faith”, “Foreign Language” and “Anti-Bias Curriculum”) was adapted from the book Preschool for Parents: What every parent needs to know about preschool. Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998) Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc. www.TeachingStrategies.com Permission granted from Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Language Arts – Literacy

In order to learn to read and write, children must be familiar with language and use it to communicate ideas, desires, and feelings toward other people. By watching adult actions, children learn that reading and writing are important and serve many purposes in our fast-paced society. The literacy development process begins before children learn to read and write through formal instruction. The joint position statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and NAEYC states, “*The early childhood years, from birth through eight, are the most important period for literacy development.*” Research suggests that reading and writing are best learned in an environment that takes into account each child’s respective learning style and cultural background. Children can succeed in school and life when this occurs.

Children can learn at their own pace in appropriate ways as they play, when listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities are infused throughout the day. Learning to read and write are skills that are acquired at an individual pace. Some children begin to read in preschool and kindergarten. Others may not read until first or second grade. Although children are ready to read and write at different ages, all children benefit from rich literacy experiences.

What is literacy development?

- **Listening and speaking:** During preschool and kindergarten, children’s vocabularies increase dramatically. As children play with each other they should be encouraged to use language to communicate ideas and feelings, ask and answer questions, and tell stories about things that have happened to them. Children can think about the meaning of words, pay attention to stories, relate them to their own lives, and manipulate the sounds in words with rhymes.
- **Early reading:** Young children need to explore books—to be read to and explore the same books over and over again. As they hear stories they begin to recognize parts of a story and develop a desire to retell these stories. When children are exposed to books they often begin to realize that words are symbols for ideas and thoughts. Over time, children realize that printed letters represent specific words.
- **Early writing:** Learning to read and write is interrelated. As children recognize that words are symbols they realize that these symbols can be put on paper to share ideas and information. In the beginning, children use pictures and scribbles to communicate. Next they move on to stringing random letters together. As they learn to connect the sounds with letters they use beginning consonants to represent words and move on to write with invented spelling and later standard spelling.

*There is no frigate like a
book to take us miles
away.
--Emily Dickinson*

How does literacy happen in an early childhood classroom?

Children should be read to every day. Children who have enjoyable experiences with stories want to become readers themselves. Using good quality books that children enjoy, teachers can build children's excitement about reading. The classroom should have a variety of picture books and poetry that reflect different cultural backgrounds (especially those of the children) and are relevant to their experience. Teachers should read to pairs or small groups because young children cannot see words or engage in meaningful conversation when reading is done in large groups.

Children should be immersed in a print-rich environment. Just as children learn to recognize street signs, fast food logos and name brands, they will learn to read words in the classroom.

- Signs and labels should be visible at children's eye level throughout the room.
- A word wall displaying letters and words beginning with those letters is displayed on one wall of the classroom.
- Children's names should be prominently displayed in the classroom and used for a purpose—to label cubbies, identify belongings and work, and identify jobs for each day, and so on.
- The alphabet should be displayed at children's eye level and in a place where they will refer to it, such as a library or art area. This allows the children to use the alphabet as a reference to make connections between the words they know and the letters and sounds of the alphabet.

Children should be given opportunities and reasons to write every day. Children need to see that writing is important because it is a way to share information.

- There should be a writing center with a variety of writing tools as well as rubber stamps and magnetic letters.
- Children should sign their names for attendance (encourage all forms—a scribble, a letter or two, or a complete name).
- Children should be encouraged to draw picture stories and then "tell" the story
- Children should make signs, create lists, write messages, etc.
- Clipboards and markers are placed by new or popular pieces of equipment so children can sign up and take turns.
- Kindergarten children should write for their own purposes such as writing in a journal on a daily basis

How should the classroom look?

- **Outdoor area:** Provide small road maps, tickets so that the children can take pretend trips on their airplanes, boats, or trains.
- **Block area:** A basket containing markers, index cards or poster board, and masking tape should be provided so children can make signs for their block buildings; books with buildings, bridges, tools, and construction sites so that children learn they can get ideas from books; toy traffic signs.
- **House corner/dramatic play:** Magazines, cookbooks, telephone books, paper and pencils for children to use in their pretend play; food containers for a grocery store; newspapers; restaurant menus; and storybooks children can read to their dolls.
- **Cooking and food experiences:** Provide illustrated and written recipes that children can refer to as they cook so they know that writing serves a purpose.
- **Music and movement:** Post chart paper with songs and rhymes that the children are learning.

- **Library area:** Set up soft pillows and chairs where children can curl up with a book; a rich variety of picture books and recorded stories; writing materials; paper; and the alphabet displayed at children's level.
- **Computer area:** Provide picture and word directions for children to follow; several reading-and-writing related programs that hold their interest and can be used independently.
- **Art area:** Help children develop small muscle control by providing markers, crayons; paper for drawing and writing; play dough and clay.
- **Writing area:** Provide paper of various sizes, lined and unlined notebooks, and pads of paper to encourage children to write in their own way; envelopes for sending messages; cardboard or plastic letters for children to trace, compare and sort; alphabet cards and puzzles, alphabet stamps; children's name cards; hole punchers, staplers, and fasteners may be added as children begin to create their own books.

How can teachers promote literacy development?

During large, small group, or one-on-one times:

- Record on chart ideas that children dictate in a group discussions; say words out loud as they are written on the chart, display these charts throughout the room for children to refer to during the day.
- Make lists! Shopping lists for classroom and cooking supplies, lists of whose absent, lists of birthdays, lists of whose name starts with a certain letter, etc.
- Write thank-you notes to classroom visitors or people visited on a trip, get-well cards to children who are sick, etc.
- Notice street signs, advertisements, etc. on a walk or trip.
- Point to words on a page as a story is read aloud.
- Encourage journal writing.
- Let children dictate stories that an adult writes down and children can illustrate.
- Encourage kindergartners to write and illustrate their own stories.

Encourage talking. Adults should listen carefully to what children say, observe what they do. They should make comments and ask children the kinds of questions that help children to think and explain.

- Ask questions about a book.
- Talk about children's work.
- Make children aware of sounds.
- Help children become better listeners.
- Use children's names in a variety of ways.

Encourage parent involvement

- Give parents suggestions as to how they can encourage their child's literacy development at home.
- Have a lending library or take home book packages.
- Send home a classroom mascot in a bag with a journal. Every child gets a turn and writes about (dictated to parent) the visit in the journal, which is then returned to school.

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Children required to sit as a whole group and do paper and pencil activities such as copying letters or words, or completing ditto, workbook, or coloring sheets.
- Teachers working with children in formal reading groups.
- Teachers talking to children primarily by asking factual questions that require one word or simple straightforward answers

Adapted from pp. 67–76 of Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998). Preschool for Parents: What every parent needs to know about preschool. Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Literacy Resources

Learning Language and Loving It: A Guide to Promoting Children's Social and Language Development in Early Childhood Settings by E. Weitsman & J. Greenberg

Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children by S.B. Neuman, C. Copple, & S. Bredekamp

Literacy Through Play by G. Owocki

Make Way for Literacy: Teaching the Way Young Children Learn by G. Owocki

Young Children and Picture Books: Literature From Infancy to Six by M.R. Jalongo

Much More Than the ABC's : The Early Stages of Reading and Writing by J.A. Schickedanz

The Living Classroom: Writing, Reading, and Beyond by D. Armington

The Complete Book of Rhymes, Songs, Poems, Fingerplays, and Chants by Jackie Silberg & Pam Schiller

Storytelling with Puppets, Props, and Playful Tales by Mary Jo Huff

Linking Language: Simple Language and Literacy Activities throughout the Curriculum by Robert Rockwell, Debra Reichert Hoge & Bill Searcy

Ready, Set, Read! Hundreds of Exciting, Skill-Appropriate Activities by Dr. Jean R. Feldman

Creating Readers by Pam Schiller

Building Bridges with Multicultural Picture Books: For Children 3-5 by Janice Beaty

Picture Book Activities: Fun and Games for Preschoolers Based on 50 Children's Books by Trish Kuffner

Mathematics

As young children grow and develop they begin to grasp mathematical relationships in the world around them. They develop an understanding of patterns and relationships, number concepts and operations, estimation, geometry and spatial relationships, measurement, and probability and statistics. Young children need concrete experiences to acquire these skills by using real materials to solve real problems.

What's involved in math learning?

- **Patterns and relationships**: Children should have opportunities to sort and classify objects; study characteristics such as shape, size, and color; to recognize, create, and copy patterns; and to use language to describe and compare relationships.
- **Number concepts and operations**: Children begin to understand that a number such as five stands for five objects. They also master one to one correspondence and the understanding that when counting objects, the last number counted in a group tells how many there are. As children understand that they can join, remove, and compare quantities, they begin to use the basic procedures of addition and subtraction to solve problems.
- **Estimation**: Estimation involves using numbers to make a guess or a prediction. Opportunities for estimating occur naturally when measuring, counting, and sharing materials.
- **Geometry and spatial relationships**: Geometry and spatial relationships is the understanding of one's surroundings and the objects in them. Children need hands-on exploration with physical materials and everyday objects to develop spatial skills.
- **Measurement**: Measuring involves determining amounts. Children use materials in hands-on activities to explore length and area, time, temperature, mass, and capacity. They create their own tools for measurement, as well as simple clocks, timers, scales, thermometers, measuring cups, and rulers.
- **Probability and statistics**: Probability and statistics involves determining whether something is likely to happen and why. Children develop these skills by collecting data, making predictions, asking questions, and organizing the information on graphs.

How does math happen in the early childhood classroom?

- Children participate in mathematical conversations every day. Opportunities for learning math occur throughout the day. Mathematical concepts are embedded in activities such as the question of the day, reciting rhymes, understanding directions, building with blocks, or experimenting with materials at the sand/water table.
- Children use concrete or manipulative materials in their explorations. Children need a variety of materials to manipulate as they engage in mathematical problem solving. They need objects to sort, classify, build, count, measure, and create designs or patterns. Books with math concepts such as number, shape, and pattern should be available to the children.
- Children solve real mathematical problems every day. Opportunities for mathematical problem solving occur naturally. Children may be involved in tasks such as matching the cups to the napkins at snack time, measuring ingredients for a recipe, or estimating how much time it will take to clean up the classroom. Through daily problem solving experiences, children learn the value of math in every day life.

How should the classroom look?

- **Block area:** Blocks should be organized by size and shape. Include blocks with interesting geometric shapes such as cylinders, curves, ramps, and planks. Interlocking blocks and blocks made of different materials can provide additional interest.
- **House corner/dramatic play:** Clothes to fit dolls, dishes, pots, and pans of different sizes, colors, and shapes, and forks, knives and spoons to set the table. Include containers with matching lids. Dress-up clothes including pairs of shoes. Play money and a cash register to introduce money value concepts.
- **Table toys:** Games, manipulatives and puzzles such as geoboards, pegboards, pattern blocks and cards, Unifix cubes, Tangrams, attribute blocks, Lincoln Logs, Legos®, pan balances, tape measures, and board and card games. Other collected items could be included such as old buttons, shoestrings, dice, and beads.
- **Cooking activities:** Measuring spoons, cups, and bowls to use in preparing foods, cookbooks, and a kitchen timer.
- **Library:** Books about number, shape, and making comparisons. Many traditional fairy tales include math concepts, such as The Three Bears and The Gingerbread Man.
- **Art area:** A variety of materials to create designs with different shapes, colors, and objects. Materials could include paint, markers, clay, fabric, tissue paper, corks, wood, pipe cleaners, yarn, sponges, etc.
- **Sand/water tables:** Containers of different shapes and sizes to fill, such as buckets, tubs, cups, cartons, and measuring tools.
- **Computers:** Software that stimulates children to work with shapes, numbers and patterns.

Mistakes are a fact of life, it is the response to error that counts.
--Nikki Giovanni

How can teachers promote math?

The teacher's role in fostering math learning is to provide the children with a stimulating math environment and build on the child's natural curiosity about shapes, sizes, amounts, and other math concepts. The teacher must observe children exploring math concepts and challenge their thinking through questions. Following are some examples:

- Encourage children to think about their constructions: "Which is taller, shorter, longer...?"
- "What shapes did you use?" "Which is first, second, third, last?" "How many small blocks make one big block?"
- Help children notice designs: "I see that you used circles and squares." "Tell me about your pattern."
- Encourage logical thinking skills: "How did you decide to put these objects together?" "How are they alike?" "How are they different?"

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Children working on pencil and paper activities such as coloring worksheet pages or completing a page on math facts
- Children being drilled with flash cards or reciting number facts
- A lack of labeling to categorize supplies and materials

Adapted from pp. 77-86 of Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998). *Preschool for Parents: What every parent needs to know about preschool*. Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Mathematics Resources

Count on Math by Pam Schiller and Lynne Peterson

More than Counting, Whole Math Activities for Preschool and Kindergarten by Sally Moomaw and Brenda Hieronymous

Much More than Counting, More Math Activities for Preschool and Kindergarten by Sally Moomaw and Brenda Hieronymous

One, Two, Buckle my Shoe, Math Activities for Young Children by Sam Ed Brown

Cup Cooking by Barbara Johnson Foote

Group Games in Early Childhood Education: Implications of Piaget's Theory by Constance Kamii and Rheta DeVries

Showcasing Mathematics for the Young Child: Activities for Three-, Four-, and Five-Year-Olds by Juanita V. Copley

Little Kids—Powerful Problem Solvers: Math Stories from a Kindergarten Classroom by Angela Andrew and Paul R. Trafton

The Young Child and Mathematics by Juanita V. Copley

The Block Book (Third Edition) by Elisabeth S. Hirsch

Number in Preschool and Kindergarten: Educational Implications of Piaget's Theory by Constance Kamii

Enriching Early Mathematical Learning by Grace Cook, Lesley Jones, Cathy Murphy, and Gillian Thumpston

Science

Young children learn best when they “do” science. Just like scientists, they ask questions and find answers by trying out their ideas and observing what happens. Children are natural scientists whose search for answers should be encouraged in preschool and kindergarten. Both educators and scientists agree that science teaching and learning for young children should involve active, hands-on experiences where children acquire and use scientific skills and knowledge.

What’s involved in science learning?

- **Asking questions**: Even the youngest children come to school ready to be scientists. If their questions are treated seriously, children retain interest.
- **Observing**: Young children can be focused observers when they see that using their senses helps them find answers to their questions.
- **Predicting**: Children should talk with each other to explore ideas, which encourage thinking about what will happen next.
- **Setting up experiments**: Young children can be helped to plan appropriate experiments, consider what materials they need to conduct the experiment and then carry out the experiment.
- **Interpreting data**: Young children can compare, sort, classify, and make graphs in order to interpret information.
- **Communicating information**: Early childhood teachers need to encourage children to talk about what they have seen and done, draw pictures and diagrams, make constructions or designs, dictate findings to an adult or record them electronically, or keep written records.

In addition to scientific skills, young children should acquire a foundation of science concepts and knowledge from which they can build. Young children benefit from studying content that is familiar to them because they connect new knowledge to what they already know. Whether the topics studied relate to the living world (plants, animals, people); matter, motion, and energy (water, wheels and gears, balls and ramps); or the earth and environment (weather, rocks, recycling), young children should explore the concept through active investigations. Whatever the choice of particular content, it should be based on children’s interests and what is immediately available in the environment.

How does science happen in the early childhood classroom?

- Children engage in scientific explorations daily. Children’s play is a way of asking questions as they attempt to figure out how things work. As children interact with their environment, adults can extend the learning by asking, “What would happen if...?”
 - There should be a variety of materials and objects in many parts of the room that inspire scientific explorations every day.
 - Children have the opportunity to talk about their ideas and discoveries and receive feedback and encouragement from adults.
- Children should have many scientific tools to use. When materials are available every day, children receive the message that everything is open to exploration.
 - String and other tools to measure length and area, magnifying devices, eye-droppers, straws, measuring cups, rain gauges, magnets, and gears are some of the many materials that children can use to explore their world.

- Children study topics over time. Older preschoolers and kindergarteners benefit from focusing on a particular scientific topic over several weeks. They can develop specific knowledge of how and why things happen. The depth of knowledge children acquire is much more important than the topics studied. For example:
 - Maintain an ant farm in the classroom and observe what ants look like and do, what they need to live, and how ants work together in a community.
 - After they have studied a living animal, they should understand or know that animals eat, sleep, and grow and have particular habits of living. With this beginning understanding, children can go on to study other animals and have a frame of reference from which to ask questions and observe.

How should the classroom look?

- **Sand/water tables:** Bowls, buckets and shovels, cookie cutters, gelatin molds, dump trucks, sticks, straws, eye droppers, muffin tins, soap, sponges, water wheels, wire whisks, egg beaters, funnels, ladles, measuring cups and spoons are some of the materials that engage children’s interest and stimulate exploration.
- **Block area:** Pictures of buildings and bridges encourage experiments with construction; labeled shelves help with sorting and classifying; scales for weighing lead to experiments with heavy and light objects.
- **Music and movement activities:** Movement exercises motivate children to explore different ways in which a body can move, and to think about space as they shrink up or stretch to become as small or large as they can. They learn about cause and effect when they explore the sounds of musical instruments.
- **Cooking activities:** When children combine ingredients, mix, stir, beat, or chill, they learn about cause and effect and change.
- **Manipulatives:** Objects for sorting and classifying—cubes, small figures, shells, beads, nesting boxes, rocks, pegs and pegboards—help children become careful observers.
- **Outdoors:** Taking science tools such as magnifiers outdoors enables children to continue their experiments in the natural world.
- **Art area:** Primary paint colors encourage experimenting to create new colors; collage materials influence studies of texture; sculpting and molding materials inspire experiments with shapes and change.

How can teachers promote science?

Fostering children’s emerging scientific thinking means allowing them to do what scientists do—find answers for themselves. When the classroom and teachers engage children as scientists, they encourage a sense of wonder and a desire to question and experiment. Adults who notice children’s play and make comments or ask open-ended questions that develop new thinking encourage children to “do” science. Conversations like these are examples:

- Observing sand play: “Which kind of sand do you think can make a bigger pile, wet or dry? Would you like to experiment? And then, “What did you find out? Why do you think that happens?”
- During building activities: “Which wall is the strongest? Why do you think so?” And then, “How could you test the walls? What did you find out? I see you picked out blocks that are all the same. How are they the same?”
- During a walk: “What do you notice about the clouds today? Let’s look for signs of spring and see what we can find.”

- Encourage parent involvement by sending home simple ideas for scientific exploration using everyday objects. Give examples of questions parents can ask, e.g., parents and their child can experiment with objects that sink or float in the tub, asking questions such as: What do you think will happen? Will this sink or float? What happens if you push it to the bottom of the bathtub and let it go? What happens if you fill it with water?

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Projects that only some children get to do while others watch and wait.
- Teachers conducting science experiments while children watch quietly.
- A science area or table that is little used and/ or not interesting.

Adapted from pp. 87-96 of Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998). Preschool for Parents: What every parent needs to know about preschool. Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Science Resources

Science with Young Children by B.G. Holt

The Very Young Scientist: Hands-On Investigations for Young Children by Jean Stangl

More Than Magnets: Exploring the Wonders of Science in Preschool & Kindergarten by Sally Moomaw & Brenda Hieronymous

Open the Door, Let's Explore More! Field Trips of Discovery for Young Children by Rhoda Redleaf

Exploring Science in Early Childhood Education: A Developmental Approach by Karen Lind

Everyday Discoveries: Amazingly Easy Science and Math Using Stuff You Already Have by Sharon MacDonald

Hollyhocks and Honeybees: Garden Projects for Young Children by Sara Starbuck, Marla Olthof, and Karen Midden

Sand and Water Play: Simple, Creative Activities for Young Children by Sherrie West & Amy Cox

Block Play: The Complete Guide to Learning and Playing with Blocks by Sharon MacDonald

Social Studies

Social studies, or the study of people: how they live, work, interact with others, and solve problems, begins at birth. Young children learn social studies by forming relationships, learning to communicate, and exploring their world. They begin by learning about themselves, their families, and the people in their communities. As children interact with their environment and with family and friends in the context of everyday life, they learn social studies.

What is involved in learning social studies?

- **Spatial or geographic thinking**: Children understand space and become aware of the physical characteristics of the places where they live and its location in relation to other places. Children can talk about how to navigate the playground or classroom, discuss directions to get from one place to another, draw or paint maps of places they go, and begin to understand that maps represent actual places.
- **People and how they live**: Children notice characteristics in habits, homes and work; think about family structure and roles; and recognize how people rely on each other for goods and services.
- **People and the environment**: Children learn that people affect the environment by changing it (building cities, roads, highways or dams) and by protecting it (recycling, land stewardship and preservation).
- **People and the past**: Children learn about time in relation to themselves. Children talk about their daily schedule, what they did yesterday or will do tomorrow. Children love to discuss what they can do now that they couldn't do when they were "babies". Children are able to appreciate stories about other places and times if they are relevant to their own experiences.

*In what other profession
do you get hugs each day
for being there?*

--Patricia Willis

How does social studies happen in an early childhood classroom?

- Children learn social studies as part of everyday life in the classroom. As children play with each other or side-by-side they learn to share, cooperate and take turns. Teachers can also increase children's learning about social studies by talking about appropriate behavior and the need for rules. When teachers talk about what would happen if everyone tried to get their lunch at the same time or how the room would look if no one helped to clean up, children become aware of the needs of the group and how to work together. A classroom community encourages children to treat others respectfully and accept differences in others.
- Children have concrete materials and objects related to their own lives in order to encourage investigations. A variety of dramatic play props in the classroom allow children to role play various people with whom they are familiar, such as family members or community workers.
- Children have opportunities to investigate topics over time. As a child grows out of the egocentric stage of 'only me', a natural curiosity about others emerges. The topics and themes teachers choose to plan activities reflects how well they know the children and their interests and how familiar they are with the community. These topics begin with what children know and see on a daily basis and allow children to be in control of their investigations and learning. As children ask how things are made, how they work, and who makes them, they further their understanding of social studies.

How should the classroom look?

If studying a unit on construction, for example:

- Block area: Post pictures of how buildings are constructed, bulldozers, tubes, backhoes, ramps, derricks, and construction workers
- House/dramatic play: Hard hats, lunch boxes, carpenter aprons, work boots, and work shirts
- Library: Books that illustrate construction work; photographs of the construction site to illustrate the changes; stories the children have illustrated about the project
- Table toys: Construction materials such as Lego© and table blocks
- Art area: A group mural of a building under construction

How can teachers promote social studies?

During large, small group, or one-on-one times teachers can draw attention to ways people in a community live, work and get along with one another.

- When taking attendance encourage children to think about who is present and why someone might be absent.
- Drawing get-well cards.
- Working together to plan and carry out projects or to share responsibilities.
- Relating new things to what children already know so they can make connections and become interested in them.
- Discussing rules and why they are necessary.
- Encouraging children to think about chronological, sequential order as they talk about the order of the activities of the day or about things that happened last week or last month.

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Displays that are mostly commercially or adult made.
- Whole group activities with children expected to answer test-like questions posed by the teachers.
- A classroom that functions more as a dictatorship than a democracy.

Adapted from pp. 97-106 of Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998). Preschool for Parents: What every parent needs to know about preschool. Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Social Studies Resources

Class Meetings: Young Children Solving Problems Together by Emily Vance and Patricia Jimenez Weaver
The Kindness Curriculum: Introducing Young Children to Loving Values by Judith Anne Rice

Physical Development and Health

It is easy to take children's physical development and health for granted. While it may seem that children naturally acquire skills such as running, jumping, placing shapes into matching holes, or turning the pages of a book, adults must provide the materials, equipment, time and opportunities for children to develop and refine these skills. The development of physical skills contributes to children's academic success, general health, self-esteem, stress management, and social development. Brain research shows that movement "wakes up" the brain. While physical activity promotes health, children also need to become aware of ways to stay healthy and participate in simple practices that promote health and prevent illness.

What is involved in physical skill development and health?

- **Moving skillfully** Children enthusiastically master many skills during the early years such as running, leaping, jumping, skipping, climbing, hopping, moving to music, and moving around, under, and over objects. With practice, children become increasingly adept at all of these maneuvers. Children refine these skills as they learn how to transfer hand positions as they climb, to jump from platforms and roll, to skip alternating their feet, and to make their movements match the beat.
- **Manipulating objects** Young children love to touch, throw, catch, kick, strike, and move objects from place to place. The skills involved in manipulating objects are ones children will need for more advanced learning and specialized sports. Therefore, children need access to a variety of objects and places to move them.
- **Balancing and controlling the body** The process of balance and control begins when children are babies and gain the control to lift up their heads. It continues in natural progression as they learn to sit, crawl, stand, and take their first steps. During preschool and kindergarten, children refine their abilities to reach, twist, turn, bend, stretch, lift, carry, push and pull, and walk across a balance beam. Providing challenges such as moving across the floor using one foot and both hands are fun for children and encourage them in their acquisition of these skills
- **Refining fine muscle skills** In preschool, children's fine muscle skills are just beginning to develop. While kindergarteners fine muscles are more developed they continue to need many opportunities to refine these skills. Most young children do not have the hand and wrist control or the eye-hand coordination necessary for tasks such as writing or copying letters or numbers off a chart or board or on a worksheet. Asking children to do these things often causes frustration and discouragement. Young children need many opportunities to develop strength in their fine muscles by tying shoes, drawing, cutting with scissors, balancing blocks, using play-dough, and working with manipulatives. As kindergartners become more adept with their fine muscles they are able to be successful as they write letters and numbers.
- **Participating in simple practices that promote healthy living** Children learn about health by doing healthy things. As children function in a group there are a variety of opportunities for teachers to encourage healthy practices. Books about health, meal or snack time, and cleaning up offer opportunities for children to learn about health. Children should be involved in simple tasks such as cleaning up and washing hands after using the toilet and before eating.

*Jumping has always
been the thing to me.
It's like leaping for joy.
--Jackie Joyner-Kersey*

How do physical development and health happen?

- The daily schedule should provide at least thirty minutes for children to be active outdoors, or, if weather does not permit, indoors. Children should also have at least an hour of free choice center time during which they can explore, move, and act on objects. Teachers can use these parts of the day to challenge children's development by encouraging them to try new things and planning activities that promote physical skills. For example a teacher may set up hoops and create a game where children jump from hoop to hoop.
- Children should have a variety of materials that promote large and small muscle skills. Large muscle equipment both indoors and outdoors as well as ample space for movement are necessary for large motor development. In order to develop fine motor skills children need materials for drawing, gluing, and cutting; toys that interlock and fit together; objects to sort and order; and sensory items such as play dough, water, and sand.
- Children need opportunities to express themselves freely through movement. Many young children find it easier to communicate physically rather than verbally. Teachers can encourage children to act out ideas from a story, pretend to be an animal or the wind, and show how a flower grows from a seed. Music also provides many opportunities for children to express themselves through movement. Children should have many opportunities to move their bodies freely as they listen to music.
- Health concepts should be integrated into the curriculum throughout the day. Teachers can read books about going to the doctor or dentist, healthy foods, or other health topics throughout the day. During meals teachers can talk to children about what they are eating and how it meets their nutritional needs. Children should also be involved in healthy practices such as washing hands before meals and after toileting. Finally children should be informed of rules for behavior and how these keep them safe and healthy.

How should the classroom look?

- **Outdoors:** Sturdy climbing equipment with cushioning materials underneath; tricycles and riding toys; plastic or foam bats and balls; rubber balls of all sizes; balance beams; a sand box that can be covered when not in use and toys for scooping, pouring and digging.
- **House corner/dramatic play:** Dress-up clothes that require zipping, buckling, snapping or buttoning; dolls and accessories; dishes and utensils; pictures of healthy food; photos of healthy practices; books about healthy food.
- **Table toys:** Pegs and peg boards, puzzles, interlocking construction toys, pattern blocks, beads and laces, self-help skills boards, small objects to sort.
- **Cooking:** Utensils for mixing, beating, shaking, measuring, scraping, cutting, flipping, and pouring; mixing bowls.
- **Art area:** Crayons, markers, pencils, plain drawing paper, scissors, clay, play dough and accessories.
- **Blocks:** Blocks organized by size and shape; block accessories such as cars, people, animals, colored cubes; ample room in which to build.
- **Sensory table:** Measuring utensils, scoops, shovels, funnels, and a variety of containers.
- **Library:** Books about healthy foods, going to the doctor or dentist, getting along with others, and making friends; and photos related to health topics.

How can teachers promote physical development and health?

Teachers play a crucial role in encouraging children to try out new physical skills and refine and practice ones they have mastered. Some ways teachers can do this are:

- Encouraging children to use different physical skills such as hopping, skipping, jumping, throwing and catching, striking, balancing.
- Inviting children to use their bodies to explore the concept of speed: “Everyone, find a space where you have room to move. First we are going to move slowly. Can you show me how a turtle would move? A worm? A leaf falling gently from tree?”
- Providing specific instruction on a new skill: “Gallop like a horse is kind of tricky. Watch my feet and I’ll do it slowly so you can try it one step at a time.”
- Reassuring a child who is taking a risk: “The top of the slide is pretty high. I’ll stand here until you feel comfortable.”
- Encouraging a child: “If you hold the paper in your hand this way, it might be easier to cut it with the scissors.”
- Reading books about health and discuss healthy practices during routines such as washing hands or getting ready for naps.
- Encouraging children to solve their own problems and give them strategies for working through conflicts with others.

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Children sitting for long periods of time watching and listening
- Children engaging in fine motor tasks that are too difficult and frustrating
- Teachers using outdoor time as their break rather than playing with the children and organizing activities.
- Children completing worksheets about health topics.

Adapted from pp. 57-66 of Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998). Preschool for Parents: What every parent needs to know about preschool. Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Physical Development and Health Resources

Star Power for Preschoolers: Learning Life Skills Through Physical Play by Andrew Oser

The Power of Relaxation by Patrice Thomas

Jump Wiggle, Twirl, and Giggle! by Roberta Altman

Growing, Growing Strong: A Whole Health Curriculum for Young Children by Becky S. Bennett, Charlotte Hendricks, and Connie Jo Smith

85 Engaging Movement Activities - Learning on the Move, K-6 Series by Phyllis Weikart and Elizabeth Carlton

Yoga Games for Children by Danielle Bersma and Marjoke Visscher

Movement in Steady Beat, 2nd Edition Learning on the Move, Ages 3-7 by Phyllis Weikart

101 More Dance Games for Children by Paul Rooyakers

The Outside Play and Learning Book by Karen Miller

Activities Unlimited by Alexandra Cleveland, Barbara Caton, and Leslie Adler

Wiggle Giggle & Shake by Rae Pica

101 Movement Games for Children by Huberta Wiertsema

Active for Life: Developmentally Appropriate Movement Program for Young Children by Stephen W. Sanders

Fine Arts

Art is a language to communicate ideas and feelings. Experiences in the arts enable children to express themselves in ways that do not rely on words or numbers. When they use art materials to paint, design, create, weave, construct or mold they are expressing feelings and emotions through their work. They are also furthering their learning and development in all areas: socially, cognitively, emotionally, and physically.

It is important to understand the types of experiences that allow children to develop their artistic talents and grow creatively. Precut designs, dittos, handouts and coloring pages stifle creativity as they give children the impression that there is a right and a wrong way to create things. They reinforce adult thinking and do not allow children to develop their own thinking. Creativity and creative development flow from a child's imaginations, not from art based on adult made models or patterns.

What is involved in the arts?

Painting, drawing, dancing, modeling, sculpting, and listening to music are all different kinds of creative expression. Allowing children to explore all mediums will develop their creativity.

- **Visual arts:** Painting, drawing, creating collages, modeling with clays, building, making puppets, weaving, stitching, print makings and rubbings are all types of visual arts. Giving children the chance to paint with different types of paint on different types of paper allows children to explore texture and medium. Having access to many materials and adults who talk about those materials allows children to explore and express their ideas.
- **Music:** Research shows that music stimulates brain activity. Musical literacy develops when children listen to many different types of music. Children should be provided with musical instruments, musical materials, and opportunities to sing and make up songs of their own. Children should be able to listen to many different types of music and a variety of instruments as well as music from other cultures. When children explore instruments on their own and make up songs they become more comfortable with different types of musical expression.
- **Movement:** Young children are natural movers. When children are encouraged to move their bodies to express ideas and respond to a variety of music and rhythm patterns they learn about their ability to move in different ways.
- **Drama:** Drama is having children tell a story using their actions and words. Preschool and kindergarten children communicate many different ideas by making up their own stories and movements. Children pretend and become many different characters such as animals, police officers or parents as they pantomime actions and create their own stories to act out.

*Every child is an artist.
The problem is how to
remain an artist when
he grows up.*

--Pablo Picasso

How do the arts happen in an early childhood program?

- Children should have multiple opportunities to explore the arts every day, by themselves and in a group. Children may not have a set idea when they start to create. Instead the use of different media and ample time will allow children to explore at their own pace. Children can create a picture by themselves, explore puppetry in a small group or join the whole class in singing a song. Quality early childhood programs should provide these opportunities.

- Children should have a variety of art materials, musical instruments and music to explore. Creating art requires repeated experiences and exploration of many different varieties of media. Opportunities for painting, gluing, cutting, building, modeling, weaving and stitching should be explored in the classroom. When children choose their own materials they are learning to observe carefully, use language, and plan their own work. Similarly, children also need many opportunities to explore sound and rhythm. As they listen to different types of music, they are able to create their own sounds, and movements.
- Children have opportunities to look, listen and respond to works of art that other people have created and to talk about what they see and hear. As children observe great paintings, listen to symphonies and songs, watch dancers and listen to musicians, they learn to form opinions about what they see and hear. Learning to observe and listen carefully and sharing their observations helps children's artistic development. It also helps children become better readers, writers, and scientific thinkers!

How should the classroom look?

Materials to be included in the art area are listed in the Minimum Equipment & Supplies Checklists. The following are ideas for other learning areas in the classroom.

- **House corner/dramatic play**: Papers, markers and crayons for drawing or making signs for play. Tapes or CD's of soft music so the "babies" can be soothed to sleep.
- **Library**: Books with pictures of the works of great artists. Recordings of different types of music.
- **Music and movement**: Musical instruments such as tambourines, shakers, bells, triangles, cymbals, wood blocks and rhythms sticks should be available for the children to use. Materials encouraging movement or pretend activities such as scarves, streamers and pieces of fabric to use as makeshift costumes.

How can teachers promote the arts?

Effective teachers can encourage children to develop as artists and musicians in many different ways, during many different activities:

- Sing as they transition from one activity to the next.
- Make up songs about things that happen during the day.
- Solve conflicts using puppetry and role-playing.
- Allow children to use expressive movements when they come to circle time or go outside.
- Play different types of music during the school day.
- Display works by professional artists in the classroom.

Teachers can also help children to grow and develop as artists by asking children about their work and engaging them in conversations about their art:

- Describe what they see in a child's art. "You used the color red and painted the whole paper." "You used many different shapes to make your picture." "Tell me how you mixed those colors and what happened when you did that." "You sang that song in a new way."
- Talk about the process of creating art. "How did you make that?" "You made a big circle on your paper." "You really smashed the play dough!"
- Ask questions that encourage thinking. "How does this picture compare to the first one you made." "Is there anything else you need to do your work?" "What will hold that together?" "What music would be best to march to and what music would be best to rest to?"

- Use words to encourage and support children’s efforts. “Where can we hang up your picture?” “May I take a photo of your creation?.” “Would you like to make a recording of the song you are singing?”
- Help children become better listeners and observers by focusing their attention on different areas. “How would you describe that picture if you were talking on the telephone?” “How does that music make you want to move?” “Can you find the color yellow in that picture?”

What you should NOT see in a classroom

- Precut art projects
- Coloring books or dittos
- Limited displays of only the best “artwork”
- Art from adult made models and patterns

Adapted from pp. 107-116 of Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998). Preschool for Parents: What every parent needs to know about preschool. Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Art Resources

Paint Without Brushes by Liz and Dick Wilmes
More than Painting by Sally Moomaw and Brenda Hieronymous
Dribble Drabble by Deya Brashears
More Dribble Drabble by Deya Brashears and Lea Brashears
Preschool Art by MaryAnn F. Kohl
Global Art by MaryAnn Kohl and Jean Potter
Mudworks by MaryAnn Kohl
ScienceArts by MaryAnn Kohl and Jean Potter
MathArts by MaryAnn Kohl and Cindy Gainer
Good Earth Art by MaryAnn Kohl and Cindy Gainer
The Big Messy Art Book by MaryAnn Kohl
Storybook Art by MaryAnn Kohl and Jean Potter
Discovering Great Artists by MaryAnn Kohl and Kim Solga
The Colors of Learning: Integrating the Visual Arts into the Early Childhood Curriculum by Rosemary Althouse, Margaret Johnson & Sharon Mitchell
Rapunzel’s Supermarket: All About Young Children and Their Art by Ursula Kolbe

Catholic Faith

Religious education in an early childhood classroom is meant to be an educational and spiritual experience for students. Throughout the school year the students should develop positive attitudes about themselves, their families, and their friends by discovering and learning more about the many gifts, talents and abilities that God has provided. Also, each student should have the opportunity to experience a strong and vibrant faith through a variety of activities and lessons.

How does religion happen in an early childhood classroom?

Parents play the most significant role in imparting religious influence to young children. However, the faith development of young children in the classroom transpires by providing them with the following opportunities:

- Reinforcement of Christian values and attitudes being taught at home.
 - i.e. - Engage children in various discussions of how prayer is present in their home.
- Participation in Christian learning experiences and activities geared to their age level.
 - i.e. - Creation of religious crafts centered around a Christian theme.
 - i.e.- Visit your school church and engage in age appropriate discussion of God's presence in the church and the many components that can be found there (pews, altar, lectern, tabernacle, cross)
- An introduction to community worship through active participation in prayer and song.
 - i.e. - Attend all-school prayer services. Prayer Services are brief and children are expected to participate with teacher assistance. Always allow for follow-up conversations.
- Fellowship and fun with other children their own age.
 - i.e. - Children engage in prayerful activity in a learning center directed toward celebrating their faith.
- Appreciation of the Bible as God's living word.
 - i.e. - Sharing suitable Bible stories such as Jonah and the Whale, Noah's Ark, The Loaves and the Fishes, The First Seven Days etc. is necessary to reveal Jesus Christ and helps us each day to know, trust, praise, serve, and obey God.
- Celebration of their own positive self image. Children's ability to know God and their ideas about God are strongly influenced by their ideas about themselves.
 - i.e. - Discover the unique qualities of each student through exploration of their many gifts and talents.

"Bring the children to me" he said. "Do not stop them. The Kingdom of God belongs to children such as these." So the children came happily to Jesus. And he took them into his arms and blessed them. -Mark 10: 15-16

How should a classroom look?

A classroom that promotes religious education should not only have a clear, visible religious component such as a prayer center, but should also have an overall prayerful climate.

Physical Environment:

Learning centers play an important role in every early childhood classroom. As part of a religion program, they provide opportunities for children to experience and investigate their faith with a hands-on, experiential approach. Your religion center should include, but is not limited to, the following age-appropriate materials:

- Children's Bible

- Cross
- Prayer Box or Prayer Journal
- Rosary
- Religious figurines (i.e. Mary, Joseph, Jesus, Saints, etc.)
- Religious Picture Books
- Photo album that celebrates the uniqueness of every student
- Posters that promote various religious behaviors
- Pictures that communicate Bible stories
- Manipulatives used to retell Bible stories (i.e. manger scene at Christmas, ark and animals for story of Noah, etc.)
- Information on various saints whose story is significant to children's present experiences
- "A Wonderful World Box," which showcases all of God's Creation.

**This center should change periodically to reflect current religion themes.

Climate

Your classroom should represent a faith community-one that cares, loves, shares, helps and prays together. A pleasant relationship between teacher and student is part of what encourages the formation of Christian attitudes, forms patterns of social behavior, and promotes the children's faith response. As students move into a larger circle beyond their families, they need continuing signs of affection, and they appreciate having their individuality recognized. They need to feel welcomed and wanted, they need praise and encouragement, and they need to know what to expect next.

How can teachers promote religious development?

A happy relationship of trust between the teacher and the children facilitates learning. This trust develops when the teacher accepts and welcomes the children as they are with "unconditional love."

- Become acquainted with each child by listening and reacting to the children's individual interests and concerns
- Support parents by providing a loving and caring classroom for their children and offering enrichment activities for faith development at home
- Model appropriate Christian behavior (i.e. – listening, helping, sharing, caring, loving, and thanking others)
- Reinforce each student's sense of self-worth as a child of God and aid them in the discovery of the unique qualities about themselves and others
- Increase the children's knowledge and participation in the Catholic Church's liturgical seasons
- Enhance the children's appreciation and celebration of God's love and goodness through Scripture, music and prayer
- Recognize that children "learn by doing" (i.e.- songs, dramatizations, stories and poems, finger plays, prayers, art activities, action games, blessings and celebrations)

Religion Resources:

Sharing God's Story by ROA-BROWN

I Am Special by Joan Ensor Plum and Paul S. Plum

Blest Are We by Dolores Ready and James Bitney

Foreign Language

The Illinois Early Learning Standards address the State Goals under “Foreign Language” with the following benchmarks for early childhood:

- Maintain the native language for use in a variety of purposes.
- Use and maintain the native language in order to build upon and develop transferable language and literacy skills.

Although the early childhood years provide the optimum window of opportunity for learning a language, applying a new language other than English should not be the goal of the curriculum. The goal for this standard should be to maintain the native language for use in a variety of purposes and to be able to build upon and develop transferable language and literacy skills.

What’s involved in foreign language learning?

The optimal time to teach a foreign language to children is during the early years when they are learning their primary language. When children learn a language early in life, they are able to master the pronunciation and thought processes of that language better than if the language was learned later in life.

If a child comes into the classroom knowing only Korean, for example, the task of the teacher is to help that child maintain his language and to learn English. The teacher could also help herself and the other children learn key words in Korean in order to ease communication with the non-English speaking child.

How does foreign language happen in the early childhood classroom?

- When the predominant language of the children is not English, the teacher helps teach the foreign language (English) by labeling equipment, areas, materials, etc. with both languages.
- Both languages are used in conversation, when possible, with teachers relating as many things as possible to the home language and culture. Teachers accept and encourage the use of both languages.
- If possible, there should be a second person in the classroom that speaks the same language as the children. If neither the teacher nor the aide is bilingual, a bilingual volunteer or parent can help out for a part of each day.

How should this look in the classroom?

- Children allowed to converse in their home language
- Labels on all furniture and toys in both the foreign language and English
- Materials of the children’s culture
- Books in both English and the foreign language
- Tapes that accompany the books in both languages

How can teachers promote foreign language?

Just as young children learn other skills by doing them and interacting with materials, children learn another language by using it in context. When children are put on the rug and drilled for 30 minutes in colors and numbers they do not learn a language effectively. Rather the second language should be incorporated into the day. For example

teachers can conduct the entire breakfast and lunch meals in both languages. Children will learn a second language in an authentic and lasting manner when teachers use both languages throughout the day and give children opportunities to do the same.

The things we have in common far outnumber and outweigh those that divide us.
-Walt Disney

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Flash card drills
- The whole group of children in circle time repeating after the teacher
- Learning a song without knowing the meaning of the words that are being sung
- Some children or even the whole group pulled away from regular classroom activities to go for language instruction (except for special needs)
- Repetition of abstract words without concrete objects
- More than 20 minutes devoted to foreign language instruction.

Social / Emotional Development

Positive social-emotional growth is the foundation of a child's healthy development and an important component of every early childhood program. Research shows that children who have friends, who know how to work cooperatively with others, and who can manage their emotions are happier and more likely to be successful in school and in life than children who have not mastered these skills. A child's social and emotional experience during the first five years of their life is the foundation for future academic success.

Parents, as the child's first teacher, lay the foundation for social and emotional development. When a parent coos to their infant, plays "patty-cake" with their baby, and ring-around-the-rosy with their toddler, they are helping to develop social skills by teaching basic social interaction. When parents set firm limits for a child's behavior, talk with their child about their feelings, and help a child learn self-control, this foundation is enhanced. In a good early childhood program, teachers also set firm limits for children, by talking with them about their feelings, and helping them regulate their behavior.

What's involved in social and emotional skills?

Social and emotional skills are fostered through the positive use of discipline. The goal of good discipline, or guidance, is to help children develop self-discipline which is the ability to control their own behavior, act responsibly, and show respect for self and others. Self-regulation is learned when adults have developmentally appropriate expectations, set clear limits, and build positive relationships with children.

The following is evidence that a child's social and emotional skills are growing:

- **Growing self-confidence:** During the early years, children are developing a sense of who they are and what they can do. They believe they will succeed and ask adults when they need help. They are curious and want to discover new things. They respond positively when adults encourage them to seek out answers to things that interest them. Teachers enhance self-control by having reasonable and clear expectations for a child's behavior and by providing attainable challenges. Skilled teachers support and encourage the interests of the child. They know when a child is frustrated, when to step in, and when to let a child problem solve on her own.
- **Developing self-control:** Children with self-control are learning to handle their own emotions and control their actions in age appropriate ways. Preschool and kindergarten children have strong feelings and may lack the verbal skills to express them. They may have fears that they cannot express. Skilled teachers help children work through their emotions by providing them with ways to express their feelings through play, including creative art and active and quiet activities. Skilled teachers help children use words to communicate their needs and help children learn alternative ways to solve conflict.
- **Making friends:** Children who have friends usually like to go to school. They approach other children, participate in conversations, appreciate others' work, and take turns. They have good communications skills, and are capable of exchanging ideas, feelings and concepts with others. They are cooperative and can balance their own needs and with the needs of others. Children need to learn to get along with children who are different from them. Society is becoming more diverse and children need to develop an appreciation and respect for other people.

How is social/emotional development fostered in the early childhood classroom?

Schools need to value social and emotional development. Some schools can be so focused on preparing children academically that social and emotional development is not a priority. In high quality programs children feel that they belong to a classroom community. They have opportunities to participate in a group, play with others, and are taught a system to resolve conflicts.

*Those who do not
know how to weep
with their whole
heart don't know
how to laugh either.*
--Golda Meir

Indicators of healthy social/emotional development:

- Children should feel the classroom belongs to them. Classrooms are small communities. Pictures of the children and their families throughout the classroom help the children to know the classroom is their special place. Books and toys should reflect the children and the diversity of the world. Materials should depict people of different races, sexes, ages and abilities in a variety of ways and should be free of stereotyping. Decorations made by the children rather than commercial posters are displayed.
- A child's name is one of the first things he/she learns to read, so children's names should be in several places, such as cubbies, mailboxes, and job charts. A job chart ensures that children are responsible for their classroom. Clear and consistent rules help the children feel safe. If children make up the rules for their classroom, they will be more likely to follow them.
- Children should have opportunities to participate in a group and play with others. There is a balance of individual, small, and large group play in the daily schedule. Large group time encourages children to participate in group discussions, reinforcing that everyone is equally important and should be seen and heard. The teacher may use large group time to introduce new concepts, review the day and develop plans for the next day. During the school day, at least one hour should be spent in free choice play providing children time to select their own activities and become self-directed learners. Small groups of children can gather at different centers. When learning together in small groups, in self-selected activities, children learn to share their knowledge, solve problems, and develop social skills.
- Children need to be taught conflict resolution skills. When conflicts occur, many emotions flare up and teachers need to teach children how to deal with these emotions. Calming a situation down is the first step to creating a teachable moment. Have the children count to ten, taking deep slow breaths or have the children relax in a soft corner. Teachers help children solve conflict with three simple steps:
 1. Define the problem: The teacher lowers herself to the children's level and listens as each child describes the problem. The teacher should restate what she hears.
 2. Generate a solution: The teacher can ask the children to think of some ways to solve the problem.
 3. Agree on a solution and try it out: The teacher can help the children to agree on a solution to their problem.

Children who are taught to solve conflicts generally start to resolve them on their own.

How should the classroom look?

- **House corner/dramatic play:** Props representing different cultures, dress-up clothes that allow children to reenact experiences from their life.
- **Table toys:** Duplicates of toys, a timer used to help children share toys.
- **Library:** Books representative of the children in the classroom and the diversity of the wider culture. Books that have topics that help foster social and emotional development. Books with stories about anger, fear, sharing, families and friends.

- **Art:** Media such as paint, crayons, markers, etc. that depicts a variety of skin tones.

How can teachers foster social and emotional development?

- Bend down to a child's level when speaking and listening to children.
- Help children appreciate each other's strengths and interests. Encourage children to ask each other for help. Remind children that everyone has likes and dislikes.
- Accept mistakes as part of the learning process.
- Describe desired behavior. "Please keep the paint on your paper."
- Encourage children to offer to help one another.
- Demonstrate good manners. Use "please," "thank you" and "excuse me" when talking to the children.
- Observe children's feelings as expressed by their body language and their facial expression.
- Welcome families to the classroom. Encourage families to visit.

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Teachers who focus on misbehavior.
- A time out chair used punitively in lieu of talking with a child about the misbehavior.
- Talking down to children or shouting at them from across the room.
- Expectations and guidelines for children's behavior that are not developmentally appropriate.

Adapted from pp. 45-56 of Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998). Preschool for Parents: What every parent needs to know about preschool. Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Social/Emotional Resources

A Practical Guide to Solving Preschool Behavior Problems by Eva Essa
A Very Practical Guide to Discipline with Young Children by Grace Mitchell
Powerful, Positive, and Practical Practices by Jeanette Nunnolley
Conscious Discipline by Dr. Becky Bailey
The Peaceful Classroom by Charles Smith, Ph.D
The Kindness Curriculum by Judith Anne Rice
The Values Book by Pam Schiller and Tamera Bryant
Let's Be Friends by Kristen Mary Kemple
The Power of Guidance by Dan Gartrell
Class Meetings: Young Children Solving Problems Together by Emily Vance and Patricia Jimenez Weaver
A Guide to Discipline by Jeannette Stone
Meeting the Challenge: Effective Strategies for Challenging Behaviors in Early Childhood Environments by Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky
Challenging Behavior in Young Children by Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky
The Emotional Development of Young Children by Marilou Hyson
Fostering Children's Social Competence: The Teacher's Role by Lillian Katz and Diane McClellan
Relationships, the Heart of Quality Care: Creating Community Among Adults in Early Care Settings by Amy C. Baker and Lynn A. Manfredi/Petitt
Social & Emotional Development: Connecting Science and Practice in Early Childhood Settings by Dave Riley, Robert R. San Juan, Joan Klinkner and Ann Ramminger

Anti-Bias Curriculum

Children begin to notice differences at a very young age. Two-year-olds notice gender and racial differences, and by age three children show signs of the influence of societal norms and biases. They may exhibit pre-prejudice (beginning feelings and ideas that can turn into prejudice) toward others based on race, gender, or a disability. Children may develop this pre-prejudice as a result of the models in their lives; societal attitudes, values, and norms; or because they are simplistic in their thinking and reach false conclusions based on limited reasoning abilities. As a result, four and five year olds engage in gender-appropriate behavior as defined by societal norms and enforce it without adult intervention. They also use race as a reason to not interact with someone who is different from them and show discomfort and rejection of differently-abled people. The fact that children as young as four have developed these attitudes about race, gender, and disabilities makes it clear that early childhood teachers must address these issues. Children need active intervention by adults in their lives to help them develop positive attitudes about people who may be different than they are.

What's the difference between anti-bias and multicultural?

Sometimes the terms “multicultural education” and “anti-bias curriculum” are used interchangeably. Often when teachers use a multicultural approach, they tend to focus on aspects of various cultures such as clothing, food, and holidays. This educational approach tends to turn into a “tourist” trip where the class “visits” another country or people group briefly. Unfortunately, most of the activities focus on objects and customs out of the context of daily life and overemphasize holidays. The activities are also very short term and the class may never “visit” that culture or group again during the school year. Due to the thought processes of young children, it is difficult for them to relate to a cultural group or country to which they have no personal connection. They also have difficulty relating to historical events if they cannot relate them, in some way, to their own personal lives. A multicultural approach usually does not directly address bias and stereotyping, assuming instead that if children are exposed to various cultures or groups of people, they become comfortable with them.

An anti-bias curriculum, on the other hand, is founded on the fact that biases and negative stereotypes about human diversity in society undermine the healthy development of all children. The anti-bias approach does the following:

- Acknowledges that there are differences among people
- Creates an environment in which all aspects reflect diversity
- Supports activities about diversity in the context of children’s daily life at home and at school
- Cultivates empathy for fairness
- Connects holidays and celebrations to daily life, history, and struggles for justice
- Encourages adults to listen for and respond to children’s comments and questions
- Provides intervention when biased behavior occurs
- Develops critical thinking about stereotyping
- Helps children and adults develop skills for coping with and challenging bias
- Supports teacher self-awareness about his/her biases in attitudes and behaviors
- The goals of an anti-bias curriculum are that children will construct a knowledgeable and confident self-identity and become comfortable and empathetic in interacting with diversity among people. Further goals are that children will develop critical thinking about bias and the ability to stand up for themselves and for others in the face of bias.

How does an anti-bias curriculum happen?

- Teachers must have an intellectual and emotional awareness of the importance of anti-bias activities. Teachers need to understand the impact that anti-bias activities have on their lives and on the lives of the children in their classrooms. They must act to ensure that anti-bias activities happen in their classrooms either through appropriate planning or through spontaneous activities that are appropriate.
- Teachers can share things about their culture and family with the children in the class. As teachers share pictures of their own families and discuss things they like to do, children should be encouraged to share pictures of their families and special things they like to do together. Teachers can also invite parents or other relatives of children to come to the class and share something special about their families or a special cultural event they enjoy.
- Holidays and celebrations should be carefully considered when teachers implement an anti-bias approach. Teachers should avoid or reduce the focus on commercial holidays such as Halloween or Valentine's Day. Instead teachers should focus on holidays that have value to the cultures represented in the class, religious significance, or signify struggles for justice. Teachers, children, and families can share what makes the holiday special or significant for them and how they celebrate them. At times children can dictate stories or have parents help them write stories about how their family celebrates different holidays. When holidays are celebrated in the context of daily life and children can understand why the holiday is significant in a personal way, the holiday becomes meaningful for children.
- The classroom is decorated with authentic things such as posters of real people or things, children's work, photos of children and their families, and reproductions of art works. A parent information board is an important place in the room where families can leave messages for children or the staff or share traditions, recipes, or stories with other families. Families can also display photos of events such as a wedding, new baby, or birthday.

*It is better to protest than to
accept injustice.*

--Rosa Parks

What should the classroom have?

- **Art area:** Colors, patterns, and textures from other cultures: origami paper for folding, rice paper for painting, and red clay for modeling. Magazines with pictures of people from different cultures or fabric scraps of imported cloth. Skin colored crayons, markers, paint, paper, play dough. Mirrors for children to check their physical features. Visual displays illustrating artwork, color schemes and visual patterns of other cultures.
- **Block area:** A variety of transportation toys such as trains, buses, planes, cars, horses and carts, ferries, barges, canoes, and sleds. Multi-ethnic play figures and raw materials such as cardboard, boxes, canvas, string and masking tape for children to make their own buildings and houses. Palm leaves, coconut branches, corn husks, pine branches, bark, pine needles, craft sticks, stones, and straw for creating houses, roofs, and fences. Plastic or rubber animals representing the jungle, tropical forest, desert and forest. Pictures of buildings from different parts of the world.
- **Music area:** A broad selection of vocal and instrumental music. Songs that reflect the various cultural styles of children and staff as well as other groups in the United States. Songs with simple words and melodies from other cultures and use songs that encourage differences, acceptance, and cooperation. Instruments from a variety of countries and cultures.

- **Dramatic play:** A variety of multi-ethnic dolls with a variety of clothing. Dolls that are anatomically correct, dolls with disabilities. A variety of food containers, cooking utensils, clothing, materials, and shoes.
- **Manipulative area:** Manipulatives that depict diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities, and occupations. Include puzzles, lotto, and card games, Lego or Duplo people.
- **Library area:** Books that reflect diversity of gender roles, racial and cultural backgrounds, special needs and abilities, a range of occupations and ages. Books that show people from all groups living their daily lives. Most books should be about contemporary life in the United States. Books that depict a variety of children and families within a group and various lifestyles, incomes, different languages, and various groups solving similar problems.

How can teachers promote an anti-bias curriculum?

Teachers can use the following strategies⁹ to help children learn about, accept, and become comfortable with differences in people.

- Honestly explore their own feelings about differences. Face their own prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes towards diversity and where necessary, change them.
- Make a firm rule that a person's identity is never an acceptable reason for teasing or rejecting them. Immediately step in if you hear or see children engage in such behavior. Make it clear that you disapprove, without making the child feel rejected. Support the child who has been hurt. Try to find out what underlies the biased behavior. If the reason is a conflict about another issue, help the child understand the real reason for the conflict and find a way to resolve it. If the underlying reason is discomfort with or fear or ignorance about the other child's differences, plan to initiate activities to help overcome negative feelings.
- Initiate activities and discussions to build positive self-identity and to teach the value of differences among people. Become educated about common stereotypes in society to evaluate the selection of materials and experiences for the classroom. Whenever possible, remove those containing biased messages. Use such material to teach children about the difference between "fair" and "true" images and those that are "unfair" and "untrue" and which hurt people's feelings.
- Speak positively about physical characteristics and cultural heritage. Read stories about people from each ethnic group represented in the classroom. Include people who have stood up against bias and injustice. Encourage children to explore different kinds of materials and activities that go beyond traditional gender behaviors.
- Help children learn the difference between feelings of superiority and feelings of self-esteem and pride in their heritage.
- Provide opportunities for children to interact with other children who are racially/culturally different from them and with people who have various disabilities. Visit museums and attend events that reflect diverse heritages as well as heritages of the majority of the students.
- Respectfully listen to and answer children's questions about themselves and others. Do not ignore questions, change the subject, sidestep, or admonish the child for asking a question. These responses suggest that what a child is asking is bad. However, do not over-respond. Answer all questions in a direct, matter-of-fact, and brief manner. Listen carefully to what children want to know and what they are feeling.

⁹ From *Teaching Young Children to Resist Bias: What Teachers and Parents Can Do*, by Louise Derman Sparks, Maria Gutierrez, and Carol Phillips (1989)

- Teach children how to challenge biases about who they are. By the time children are four years old, they become aware of biases directed against their identity. This is especially true for children of color, children with disabilities, and children who don't fit stereotypic gender norms. Be sensitive to children's feelings about themselves and immediately respond when they indicate any signs of being affected by biases. Give children tools to confront those who act biased against them.
- Teach children to recognize stereotypes of different groups. Young children can become adept at spotting "unfair" images of themselves and others if they are helped to think critically about what they see in books, movies, greeting cards, and on T.V.
- Use accurate and fair images to contrast stereotypic ones, and encourage children to talk about the differences. Talk about how it is hurtful to people's feelings to show them portrayed inaccurately. Read good children's books to show the reality and the variety of Native American peoples. As children get older, you can help them learn about how stereotypes are used to justify injustice, such as lower wages, poor housing and education.
- Let children know that unjust things can be changed. Encourage children to challenge bias, and give them skills appropriate to their age level. First set an example by your own actions. Intervene when children engage in discriminatory behavior. Support children when they challenge bias directed against themselves and others. Encourage them to identify and think critically about stereotypic images, and challenge adult-biased remarks and jokes. All these are methods of modeling anti-bias behavior.
- Involve children in taking action on issues relevant to their lives. As children are involved in this type of activity, be sure to discuss the issues with them, and talk about the reasons for taking action.

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Stereotypical materials such as cowboys and Indians sets, "I is for Indian".
- Depictions of people in which only the color of people is different but features are all the same.
- Children being allowed to exclude other children from play based on race, gender, or ability.
- Children leaving out or making fun of someone for any reason.
- Teachers who ignore children's negative emotions or social problems or tell children "We are all friends" without acknowledging negative feelings and giving further explanations about getting along and including others.

Anti-bias Resources

Roots and Wings, Revised by Stacey York

Lessons from Turtle Island by Guy Jones and Sally Moomaw

Nobody Else Like Me by Sally Moomaw

Including All of Us by Ceclia Alvarado, et al.

Celebrate! An Anti-Bias Guide to Enjoying Holidays in Early Childhood Programs by Julie Bisson

In Our Own Way by Cecelia Alvarado et al.

Start Seeing Diversity by Ellen Wolpert

Anti-Bias Curriculum by Louise Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force

That's Not Fair! by Ann Pelo and Tran Davidson

A World of Difference by Carol Cople

Assessment of Children

Principles of Developmentally Appropriate Assessment

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Boards of Education (NAECS/SDE) created a joint position statement titled Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment and Program Evaluation. The recommendation regarding assessment states:

“Make ethical, appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment a central part of all early childhood programs. To assess young children’s strengths, progress and needs, use assessment methods that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, tied to children’s daily activities, supported by professional development, inclusive of families, and connected to specific, beneficial purposes: (1) making sound decisions about teaching and learning, (2) identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and (3) helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions.” (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003)

NAEYC, in its book Developmentally Appropriate Practice¹⁰, states that assessing young children’s development and learning should be:

- Strategic and purposeful
- Systematic and ongoing
- Integrated with teaching and curriculum
- Valid and reliable
- Communicated and shared

To nourish children and raise them against odds is in anytime, anyplace, more valuable than to fix bolts in a car or design nuclear weapons.
--Marilyn French

Challenges of Assessment in Early Childhood

Assessment, just like curriculum, looks very different in an early childhood classroom. Teachers cannot rely upon textbooks, quizzes, letter grades, or homework assignments. Young children have limited verbal skills and are at a stage of motor development where sitting for any length of time is an unrealistic expectation.

Assessment of young children is challenging because their development and learning is inconsistent and irregular and is further complicated by the specific cultural and linguistic backgrounds from which they come. That is why any assessment process must focus on children’s individual learning strategies and where they are on the developmental continuum, not just on the attainment of specific goals and objectives.

“Because developmentally appropriate programs for young children address the whole child – physical, social, emotional, and intellectual – the assessment plan should include strategies that will gather information on a broad range of children’s activities and functioning.”¹¹ Early childhood teachers must assess young children authentically, during their daily interactions by observation, documentation of their work (self-directed as well as teacher directed), checklists, rating scales, portfolios and other methods.

¹⁰ Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8 3rd Edition, Carole Copple and Sue Bredekamp, Editors

¹¹ Reaching Potentials: Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment for Young Children, Volume I, Sue Bredekamp and Teresa Rosegrant, Editors

Teachers must also create the environment necessary to foster the development and learning they are assessing. This is done through clearly defined learning centers, developmentally appropriate materials and a daily schedule that reflects a balance of activities. In other words, good assessment practices cannot be achieved without a good curriculum in place.

What Should the Assessment Process Do?

- Help teachers understand children's development and plan learning activities more effectively.
- Support the idea that assessment, evaluation, and teaching are part of one continuous cycle of teaching and learning.
- Utilize assessment tools that support a child-centered approach.
- Develop a record of an individual child's unique experiences and accomplishments.
- Engage parents in assessment and evaluation through frequent and varied communication.
- Encourage reflection and goal setting by students, when appropriate.
- Extend the curriculum from school to home.

How Should Young Children Be Assessed?

The purpose of assessment in the early childhood years is to identify the child's level of development across all areas - social, emotional, physical, cognitive, moral, and spiritual - and to note progress and growth over time. In order to do this successfully, the teacher must:

1. know and understand the expected behavior and development for the ages of the children in the classroom.
2. be familiar with and use the IL Early Learning Standards and the IL Early Learning Standards for Kindergarten as guidelines for what children should be learning
3. gather information on a regular basis about each child.

Comprehensive assessment includes many methods - the use of a developmental continuum, checklist of skills, anecdotal records, portfolios, or periodic written observations. Each method is different. Some are specific and some open ended. Some are quick to use, while others can be time consuming. The combination of the tools provides the teacher with a global picture of the child.

Assessment Methods

Curriculum Based Assessments

These are instruments and procedures for initial information gathering, as well as repeated measurement of child performance across a continuum of curriculum goals and objectives. Curriculum based assessments address comprehensive content across developmental domains. They show where children are on a continuum of development. They note progress over time. Developmental milestones and skills are recorded as steps on the continuum. If a child cannot do a skill or does not perform according to age appropriate expectations, it may be because the:

1. Child has not yet reached that level of development.
2. Child is not interested in the activity described by the item.
3. Child has not had a chance to explore or experience the item.
4. Classroom is not set up to encourage the child's performance.

Checklists

Checklists are used to find out if a child has reached a goal or accomplished a specific task. Teachers use checklists throughout the year to create profiles of children's individual progress in developing skills (fine or gross motor), acquiring knowledge (letter, number, color, shape recognition), or mastering important behaviors (social/emotional or self-help skills). Checklists can be a list of specific traits or behaviors arranged in logical order. Many checklists are developed for particular domains and age groups.

Anecdotal records

Anecdotal records are short written descriptions of incidents, activities, or notable observations about the child that are done at the time each occurs. They are snapshots of a specific behavior recorded as a child interacts with their surroundings or others. The observation may provide important information regarding a child's development in a particular domain (social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive). These records must be factual and non judgmental. They are accurate observations of what a child is doing written in a brief narrative form. Teachers use these records to gather information that cannot be found by looking at children's work. For example: Can the child listen to a story? This achievement can be observed and recorded in anecdotal form. Here are some guidelines:

- List the time, date, activity, and name of the child on each record
- Record only what you see or hear
- Include the child's own words
- Be positive
- Be specific, give details of situation and child's behavior
- Be objective; do not write your opinion

Teachers often have Post-Its® or a notepad handy so that such notations can be made easily.

Focused Observation

A focused observation is an observation of a child to evaluate a specific behavior or skill. The activity observed can be designed by the teacher or can be self-directed and chosen by the child.

Interview

Interview assessment is the documentation of a conversation with a child regarding what the child thinks and what he/she would like to know.

Individualized Goals or Learning Plan

Individualized plans are specific activities that the teacher has chosen to support development and progress based on their assessment of the child. They are shared with parents.

Parental Input

Teachers gather information from families, especially about children's health, development, interests, and family life.

Portfolios

Portfolio assessment is a collection of the child's experiences and accomplishments. A portfolio is a record of each, individual child's growth and should be based on the child's strengths and interests. Folders are used to store specific samples of the child's work collected at regular intervals during the school year. It is important that the same category of work product be saved over the course of a year. Portfolio assessment is documentation of the journey the child has

taken during the school year. It is the observation and recording of what he/she does in a naturally stress free setting. The focus is on what the child knows.

A portfolio may include samples of children's artwork, writing samples, graphs or charts, self-portraits, and pattern work or story dictation. It may also include photographs and audio-visual tapes. Not all demonstrations of learning can fit in a folder, therefore photographs and tapes may be used to document block constructions, music participation, or physical development. In the areas of math and science, a portfolio may include examples of graphing or the results of an experiment. A hand-print or measurement of height, taken in the fall and spring, can show physical growth in the young child.

Items put in the portfolio should be kept for an annual period with at least one sample of the child's "work" placed in the folder each month. This allows parents and teachers to see progress. General information about the child and family can be included. Occasionally, the child should be given an opportunity to choose an item to put in the portfolio.

The combination of assessment methods may vary, but should always be consistent with and address the developmental domains and learning standards identified for preschool or kindergarten children, as well as the goals of the curriculum. Every early childhood program should have an assessment plan that is clearly written, well-organized, comprehensive and well-understood by administrators, teachers and families.

How Should Assessment Information Be Shared with Parents?

Information gathered through the assessment process should be collected consistently and shared with parents in a timely manner. Developmental information is often shared informally with the parents in ongoing conversations at arrival and departure, through notes, or phone conversations or at family nights and open houses.

However, assessment information should also be formally documented and communicated to parents on a regular basis through a reporting form, such as a report card, as well as scheduled parent-teacher conferences.

Report Cards

A report card can be a narrative or a standardized form such as the one from the Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Catholic Schools. It can be distributed two, three or four times a year. If the form is created by the school, the following guidelines should be taken into consideration.

An early childhood report card:

- Should be easily understood by parents
- Should have a developmental grading scale limited to no more than 4 or 5-points
- Should be based on authentic assessment of the children with a variety of methods used by the teaching staff
- Should align with learning standards and curriculum goals
- Should have descriptions stated in the positive.
- Should address not only the content areas of the curriculum, but also the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional areas of development
- Should not include letter grades that are tied to percentages or grade point averages

In all instances of the assessment process, if issues or concerns are noted by teaching staff that might require testing, correction, or assistance in any developmental or medical way, parents should be notified as soon as possible.

Assessment Resources

A Guide to Assessment in Early Childhood: Infancy to Age Eight Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008.

Basics of Assessment: A Primer for Early Childhood Educators by Oralie McAffe, Deborah J. Leong, and Elena Bodrova

Preschool Assessment: A Guide to Developing a Balanced Approach by Ann S. Epstein, Lawrence J. Schweinhart, Andrea DeBruin-Parecki and Kenneth B. Robin

Early Childhood Building Blocks by Judy Harris Helms <http://rec.ohiorc.org>

The Power of Observation, 2nd ed. by Judy R. Jablon, Any Laura Dombro, and Margo L. Dichtelmiller

Kindergarten

The entire curriculum section of the handbook should guide kindergarten teachers as they organize their classrooms and plan their activities. While all previous information is relevant and important for kindergarten teachers, the following describes some differences between kindergarten and preschool and gives teachers kindergarten-specific information.

The Differences Between Preschool and Kindergarten¹²

At kindergarten age, children still need a continuation of what they have been doing in preschool more than they need a formal academic program. Unfortunately, today many kindergarten classrooms look more like rooms for older children. Interest areas – the blocks, dramatic play props, toys, art, sand and water tables - are usually fewer, less elaborate, or nonexistent. There may be limited opportunities for children to make choices and more teacher-directed activities with art media or other materials. Children may be required to sit and complete paper and pencil tasks for long periods of time. The expectations of what children need to learn in kindergarten have been raised inappropriately. The result is that more children experience difficulty or failure, and/or are forced to repeat kindergarten.

What Kindergarten Should Be Like

Children in kindergarten generally range in age from young five-year olds to six-year olds. At this age, they are closer in their development to preschoolers than they are to primary grade children. Therefore, a good program should look more like a good preschool than a first grade. Organizations like the NAEYC clearly support this idea. In their book, *Kindergarten Policies: What Is Best for Children?* NAEYC makes a strong statement:

“A great deal of quite conclusive research over half a century tells us that kindergarten-aged children still think like younger children; they think differently, see the world differently, act differently, and have different skills than children of 7 or 8.... The kindergarten year is one more important year in a child’s lengthy process of growing up. It is not developmentally helpful, or in the long run a success, to push and rush children through it.”

Like preschool children, kindergartners also learn most effectively through play as they interact with materials, teachers, and their peers. As a result kindergarten students must have prolonged periods of play. The kindergarten program should strengthen children’s social, emotional, and physical skills, and provide varied opportunities for children to explore reading and writing, discover mathematical relationships, investigate and experiment with materials, find out about the world, and create through the arts. In this type of kindergarten, you would see children talking, and in general, deeply involved in and excited by their work.

However, you should also see some differences between preschool and kindergarten. More focused time should be spent on early reading and writing, mathematical thinking, and long-term studies. Here are some things to look for:

- **Meeting times:** The schedule should include several times during the day for the whole group to gather for discussions about a topic the class is studying, resolve a problem in the classroom, participate in a lesson planned by the teacher, and share work they have completed.

¹² Adapted from, “Thinking Ahead to Kindergarten” *Preschool for Parents*, Dodge and Bickart.

- **Work times:** There should be one or two planned periods – depending on the length of the kindergarten day - for focused work on reading and writing or math tasks. These work times might center around a math task such as making and repeating patterns, sorting and classifying objects and comparing them on a graph, writing and drawing in personal journals, finding words that sound alike in a poem, or looking at books. Children should be working in small groups or individually, with the teacher going from group to group. During a meeting time, the teacher may lead a meeting in which each group presents their work to the whole class.
- **Long-term studies:** There should be evidence of long-term projects. By the time they are in kindergarten, children are ready to explore the kinds of studies we described in science and social studies, but in greater depth, perhaps for several weeks or even months.

The focused time children spend on tasks and extended studies of topics that interest them makes kindergarten a bridge between preschool and elementary school.

The previous kindergarten section was adapted from the book Preschool for Parents: What Every Parent Needs to Know about Preschool. pp. 117-120. Dodge, D. T., & Bickart, T. S. (1998) Naperville, IL; Washington, DC: Sourcebooks, Inc.; Teaching Strategies, Inc. www.TeachingStrategies.com
Permission granted.

Appropriate Teaching and Curriculum Approaches for Kindergarten Children

Kindergarten is an important time in the lives of young children. It is a time of transition from home and early childhood education programs to formal school programs. The NAEYC Position Statement on School Readiness provides administrators and teachers with guiding principles, regarding appropriate expectations and curriculum for kindergarten children. Expectations of the skills and abilities that young children bring to school must be based on knowledge of child development and how children learn.

- When readiness expectations are based on a narrow range of skills and competencies, and focus on only a few dimensions of development, the true complexity of growth is overlooked.
- While the beginning acquisition of basic literacy and math skills is important, these abilities are unlikely to flourish when presented out of context, as isolated skills. To focus only on sounding out letters or forming letters properly on the lines, ignores children's complex language capabilities and deprives children of the meaningful context that promotes effective learning.
- Schools must be able to respond to a diverse range of abilities within any group of children and the curriculum must provide meaningful contexts for children's learning rather than focusing on primarily isolated skill acquisition.
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum places greater emphasis on child-initiated and teacher-supported learning experiences than teacher lectures. Teaching methods include small group as opposed to whole-group activities, integrated lessons as opposed to strict division between subject areas, and active hands-on learning with a variety of materials and activities as opposed to drill and practice of repetitive seatwork.

Early childhood and kindergarten specialists have long emphasized the central role of play in young children's learning. In the course of day-to-day experiences with young children, it is easy for teachers to see that spontaneous play is a natural way of learning; observations of

children's play reveal that play provides a wide range and real depth of learning in all domains of development: physical, emotional, social, and intellectual.

However, it is just as natural for young children to learn through spontaneous investigation (close observation, experimentation, and inquiry) as through spontaneous play. Many observers have noted that young children are natural scientists and anthropologists. They devote substantial portions of their seemingly endless energy to learning all aspects of the culture they are born into: language, stories, music, and literature. With all their senses and emerging skills they investigate: when things are appropriate and when they are not, where things come from, what they are for, how they are made, and how adults and peers respond to them. They try to make sense of common objects: by prying into them, taking them apart, and manipulating them in a variety of ways. Appropriate curriculum and teaching methods include activities and encouragement for kindergarteners in these quests and feature the importance of individual children's feelings and emotions in group settings.

The developmental characteristics of children of kindergarten age call for a curriculum that involves a variety and balance of activities that can be provided in the context of project work (Katz & Chard, 1989). For example, kindergarten children can undertake projects in which they investigate a real event or object. In the course of such projects, the children will strengthen emerging literacy and numeric skills, speaking and listening skills, and acquire new words as they share their findings with others.

A good kindergarten curriculum provides activities that include:

- Integrated learning rather than teaching isolated skills
- Opportunities for children to learn by observing and experimenting with real objects
- A balance of child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities
- Opportunities for spontaneous play and teacher facilitated activities
- Group projects in which cooperation can occur naturally
- A range of activities requiring the use of large and small muscles
- Exposure to good literature and music of the children's own cultures and other cultures
- Assessment of each child's developmental progress
- Opportunities for children with diverse backgrounds and developmental levels to participate in whole-group activities
- Time for individuals or small groups of children to meet with the teacher for specific help in acquiring basic reading, writing, mathematical, and other skills as needed.

Workbooks are a component of many primary literacy and math programs. Workbooks present children with abstract tasks that are not particularly meaningful to the young, concrete learner. Workbooks focus on drill and practice, rather than on creative problem solving. Children often finish workbook tasks at different rates; therefore some children are struggling to complete the task, while others are faced with boredom. For these reasons, workbooks are not effective learning tools and should be used sparingly in the kindergarten classroom.

Many literacy and math programs offer hands-on learning activities to supplement the workbook page. These activities should be the foundation of teaching, rather than the workbook task. Below are examples of age appropriate, hands-on activities for both whole group and small group learning.

A major challenge for kindergartens is the creation of meaningful teaching and learning activities. The wide range of physical, social, and intellectual characteristics represented in a

group of beginning kindergarteners makes an informal, flexible approach to the kindergarten curriculum necessary.

Reading and Writing in Kindergarten

It is helpful to look at children's learning of reading and writing as a developmental continuum. Because children begin kindergarten with many levels of understanding about printed language, teachers must provide activities that will help each child build on his base of knowledge and increase his understanding of printed words. Children who have had many experiences with print will increase their knowledge as they learn more about how to identify and write letters and what sounds they make. Children who have had little interaction with printed language will need more focused and direct instruction from teachers to learn that the alphabet is made up of a limited number of letters and that these letters stand for all the sounds in spoken language. Regardless of where they are when they start kindergarten, all children need to have many opportunities to interact with a rich variety of print. The following are strategies that will enhance children's abilities to read and write.

- **Vocabulary Development**—Children need to be familiar with many words and their meanings to become successful readers. Teachers can help children learn vocabulary by reading to them. As children listen to teachers read from a variety of genres such as informational texts and narratives they will be exposed to many words. In order for children to learn new vocabulary, teachers need to talk about the words and their meanings before reading the story. Asking predictive and analytic questions both before and after reading also helps children with their comprehension and vocabulary development.
- **Repeated Readings**—Children love to hear the same stories over and over again—and it's good for them! It helps them become more familiar with vocabulary, the details of the story, the ways different genres are structured, the message of the author, and helps them to integrate new knowledge with what they already know.
- **Concept of Word**—Children need to understand that strings of letters with spaces between them are words and that words are not all the same length. Language experience charts where teachers write down what children say in a group shows children that written symbols have specific meanings. Story dictations are also very effective and meaningful for children as they develop word awareness, spelling, and the conventions of written language.
- **Letter Naming**—Many children have some knowledge of letters when they begin kindergarten. An important goal for teachers is to ensure that children can recognize and discriminate between letters with increasing ease. A good rule based on current learning theories is to introduce upper-case letters first and follow with the learning of lowercase letters. Introducing a few letters at a time is more effective than many although recent research has also shown that introducing one letter at a time is too slow for children. Looking at the first letters of children's names in the class can give teachers a good place to start as children are most interested in and motivated by the letters in their names.
- **Phonemic Awareness**—Children who have phonemic awareness can connect letters with the sounds they make and can manipulate sounds in words in a variety of ways. They know when words rhyme, when they have the same sound at the beginning or end, and can identify the sounds that are blended to make up words. There are a variety of ways that teachers can help children develop phonemic awareness including activities that encourage children to listen for rhyming words, make up rhymes, identify sounds at the beginning or end of words, substituting one sound for another in words,

and stretching out words and their sounds as they write them during a shared writing activity. Evidence shows that children who receive instruction in phonemic awareness become better readers.

- **Opportunities for writing**—Children need daily opportunities to write for their own reasons or purposes. Reading and writing go hand in hand in the kindergarten curriculum. As children have opportunities to write they increase their ability to read and vice versa. Also as children have more opportunities for writing they are more likely to write the words that they have seen and heard.

Although there is a wide range of abilities and interests among kindergartners there are some expectations that should be met by all students by the end of the year. While some children will go far beyond these, most of the children should achieve them. These expectations and suggestions for teachers are from the Joint Position Statement “Learning to Read and Write” from the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children and are as follows:

Expectations for children:

- Enjoy being read to and retell simple narrative stories or informational texts
- Use descriptive language to explain and explore
- Recognize letters and letter-sound matches
- Show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds
- Understand left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation and familiar concepts of print
- Match spoken words with written ones
- Begin to write letters of the alphabet and some high-frequency words

What teachers can do:

- Encourage children to talk about reading and writing experiences
- Provide many opportunities for children to explore and identify sound-symbol relationships in meaningful contexts
- Help children to segment spoken words into individual sounds and blend the sounds into whole words
- Frequently read interesting and conceptually rich stories to children
- Provide daily opportunities for children to write for their own purposes
- Help children build a sight vocabulary
- Create a literacy-rich environment for children to engage independently in reading and writing

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN: LITERACY

Goal: Demonstrate an understanding of the beginning sound B.

Whole Group Activity:

1. Put a variety of objects in a bag. Some of the objects should start with the beginning sound B, and other objects with other beginning sounds.
2. Have each child pick an object from the bag and classify it as “ Yes”, it begins with the B sound or” No”, it does not begin with the B sound.
3. Use a piece of paper or a box to separate the objects.
4. Create a graph to compare how many objects were classified in each category.

Small Group Activity:

1. Have children look for pictures of objects that begin with the sound B in old magazines.
2. Have them cut the pictures out and glue them onto collage paper.

Mathematics in Kindergarten

As our world becomes increasingly dependent on technology and mathematical and scientific thinking advances, we must help prepare children to meet the challenges of the future, make informed decisions as adults, and contribute to our society. Mathematical learning in the early years is foundational to mathematical thinking as children grow and develop. Young children use mathematics in a variety of ways as they compare quantities, find patterns, navigate in space, balance a tall tower of blocks, or share items with friends and work to have equal shares. Teachers have the responsibility to help children gain mathematical understanding in challenging and developmentally appropriate ways. The following are some principles from the NAEYC position statement regarding early childhood mathematics that should guide teachers as they consider how to best teach mathematics to kindergarten children:

- **Build on children’s interest in and experience with and knowledge of mathematics:** Kindergarteners have a natural interest in and enjoyment for math. Children may have quite sophisticated knowledge of mathematics as they sort and classify, compare quantities, and notice shapes and patterns. Children also use math to make sense of their world as they notice that someone else has more than them or that a shape is too big to fit into an opening. Because they explore math concepts in play and in daily activities, teachers need to provide opportunities for these activities in the classroom and to help children formalize their thinking. Therefore teachers need to provide many hands on materials and activities for children to work with math concepts. They also must provide vocabulary and conceptual frameworks for children to relate their intuitive knowledge to.
- **Base mathematics curriculum and teaching strategies on knowledge of child development:** Teachers must take into account all areas of development as they plan the math curriculum. For example a child’s social/emotional development will impact their ability to work with persistence to solve a problem. Also, a child’s fine motor development will affect a child’s ability to work with manipulatives or puzzles. Teachers must also understand the cognitive abilities of young children in order to understand their mathematical thinking and to provide materials and activities that will help children develop math concepts. Children explore and manipulate mathematical ideas with great interest through play. Therefore, teachers need to provide time and materials for children and understand how they can interact with children in those situations to further their understanding of mathematical concepts. An integrated curriculum meets the developmental needs of kindergarteners. As a result, mathematics should be integrated throughout the curriculum. Books about mathematical concepts should be in the reading area. Science investigations that encourage children to record observations on charts and graphs should be an ongoing part of the curriculum. Themes or units of study encourage children to investigate topics in depth and usually expose them to mathematical problems and questions. As teachers provide these opportunities and interact with children, they help them formalize their mathematical thinking and find ways to represent what they know.
- **Ensure that the curriculum follows known relationships and sequences of mathematical ideas:** Although the math curriculum should follow children’s interests, teachers must also stay focused on ideas that are mathematically central, accessible to children at their level and foundational to further mathematical learning. Teachers must be able to develop and articulate mathematical goals and standards for kindergarten

children as a learning continuum. Learning standards or curriculum guides can be used to help teachers in these efforts.

- **Actively introduce mathematical concepts, methods, and language using a variety of strategies:** Teachers must provide carefully planned experiences that focus children's attention on a mathematical idea or set of ideas. Introducing concepts such as horizontal or odd and even and having children find and create examples of these helps children refine mathematical thinking and make connections with previous knowledge. Concepts can be introduced and explored in large or small groups and in learning centers. Small group experiences allow teachers to better assess children's understanding of concepts and help children further their understanding. As teachers introduce new concepts, they must provide opportunities for review to help children make connect new learning to what they already know. Learning centers provide good opportunities for children to practice new concepts being introduced and review ideas that have already been taught.

There are a number of key content areas that kindergarten children should be exposed to. Researchers have identified number and operations, geometry, and measurement as areas of particular importance for 3-6 year old children. They play a large role in building a good foundation for learning mathematics. Kindergarten children should also have some exposure to algebraic thinking and data analysis/probability, although these concepts are more difficult and should not receive as much emphasis as those referred to above. The following expectations from the NAEYC Position Statement on Mathematics and the Illinois Learning Standards the are appropriate for kindergarten children:

Expectations for children:

- Identify, extend, and create patterns including attribute, number, geometric patterns using manipulatives, diagrams, and symbols
- Demonstrate and apply a knowledge and sense of numbers, including basic arithmetic operations, number patterns, ratios, and proportions
- Compare the numbers of items in groups
- Measure and compare quantities using appropriate units, instruments, and methods
- Describe and give examples of geometric concepts that show relationships between and among figures including symmetry, congruence, size, and location
- Collect, organize, and display a set of data using pictures, tallies, tables, charts, lines, or bar graphs, noting patterns, relationships, and changes over time
- Identify coins and represent and use their value to answer questions involving sums of money
- Create and solve problems involving simple number patterns by using words, symbols, drawings and concrete objects

What teachers can do:

- Add math related books to the literacy center
- Provide many opportunities for hands-on activities with manipulatives
- Play counting games, number charts, number puzzles, sensory materials to write numbers in, use counting songs and finger plays throughout the day
- Participate in calendar activities, represent the daily schedule with pictures and refer to it during the day
- Provide measuring tools and many opportunities to measure things using standard and non-standard measures
- Provide children with learning centers and many opportunities to make choices about the activities they will participate in

- Encourage children to solve problems by acting them out, talking about them, and using manipulatives
- Provide music that includes mathematical concepts
- Create graphs and charts with children to record data, ask questions about the findings, and encourage children to make their own charts and graphs to record information
- Notice patterns in the environment, provide children with many opportunities to create and extend patterns

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN: MATHEMATICS

Goal: Demonstrate a beginning understanding of measurement using non-standard units and measurement words.

Whole Group Activity:

1. Have each child estimate how many children's bodies it would take to measure the length of the room.
2. Document their estimations.
3. Measure the length of the classroom using children's bodies.
4. Compare to see how close the estimations were to the actual findings.

Small Group Activity:

1. Have the children trace their hand on a piece of paper.
2. Have each child measure the length of each finger using Unifix cubes.
3. Have the children write the number of Unifix cubes that measure the length at the top of each finger.
4. Compare the results.

Signs of a Good Kindergarten Classroom

Kindergarten is a time for children to expand their love of learning, their general knowledge, their ability to get along with others, and their interest in reaching out to the world.

While kindergarten marks an important transition from preschool to the primary grades, it is important that children still get to be children -- getting kindergarteners ready for elementary school does not mean substituting academics for play time, forcing children to master first grade "skills," or relying on standardized tests to assess children's success. Kindergarten "curriculum" actually includes such events as snack time, recess, and individual and group activities in addition to those activities we think of as traditionally educational.

Developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms encourage the growth of children's self-esteem, their cultural identities, their independence, and their individual strengths. Kindergarten children continue to develop control of their own behavior through the guidance and support of warm, caring adults. At this stage, children already possess an innate curiosity and are eager to learn. Teachers with a strong background in early childhood education and child development can best provide experiences that help children to grow physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

Top ten signs of a good kindergarten classroom include:¹³

1. Children are playing and working with materials or other children. They are not aimlessly wandering or forced to sit quietly for long periods of time.
2. Children have access to various activities, such as building blocks, pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as building blocks, pegboards, and puzzles. Children are not all doing the same things at the same time.
3. Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They do not spend time only with the entire group.
4. The classroom is decorated with children's original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and dictated stories.
5. Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. Exploring the natural world of plants and animals, cooking, taking attendance, and serving snack are all meaningful activities to children.
6. Children work on projects and have long periods of time (at least one hour) to play and explore. Filling out worksheets should not be their primary activity.
7. Children have an opportunity to play outside every day that weather permits. This play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.
8. Teachers read books to children throughout the day, not just at group story time.
9. Curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Because children differ in experiences, background, and developmental levels, they do not learn the same things at the same time in the same way.
10. Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel safe sending their child to kindergarten. Children are happy; they are not crying or regularly sick.

Individual kindergarten classrooms and curriculum will vary according to the interests and backgrounds of the children. But all developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms will have one thing in common: the focus will be on the development of the child as a whole.

What should NOT be seen in the classroom?

- Children sitting for long periods of time to complete paper and pencil tasks
- Most of the day spent in whole group, teacher-directed activities
- Children seated at rows of desks
- Limited opportunities for children to make choices and use materials in interest areas

Kindergarten Resources

Teaching and Learning in the Kindergarten Year, Dominic F. Gullo, Editor

Readiness for Learning: A Readiness Audit Tool for Kindergarten Classrooms, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, NCREL <http://www.eric.ed.gov>

Reaching Standards and Beyond in Kindergarten, Kathy Crowley and Gera Jacobs

¹³ *National Association for the Education of Young Children*. Washington DC:NAEYC, 1998.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD WEBSITES

Action for Children (formerly Day Care Action Council): www.actforchildren.org
American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org
Annie E. Casey Foundation – KIDSCOUNT: www.aecf.org
Center for Child Care Workforce: www.ccw.org
Chicago Metro AEYC (local affiliate of NAEYC): www.chicagometroaeyc.org
Chicago Public Schools Early Childhood Education: www.ecechicago.org
Child Care Aware: www.childcareaware.org
Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network: www.cyfernet.org
CLAS Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services: <http://clas.uiuc.edu>
Clearinghouse on Education and Parenting: www.ceep.crc.uiuc.edu
CSEFEL Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning:
<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>
Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) www.casel.org
Division for Early Childhood (Council for Exceptional Children): www.dec.sped.org
Early Childhood.com www.earlychildhood.com
Early Childhood Educators and Family Web Corner: <http://users.stargate.net/~cokids>
Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative: <http://ecap.crc.uiuc.edu/>
ECRP Early Childhood Research and Practice: www.ercp.uiuc.edu
Erikson Institute: www.erikson.edu
Gateways to Opportunity (IL Early Care and Education Professional Development Network):
www.ilgateways.com
I Am Your Child: www.iamyourchild.org
Illinois Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: www.illinoisascd.org
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services: www.state.il.us/dcf
Illinois Department of Human Services: www.dhs.state.il.us
Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map: <http://iecam.crc.illinois.edu>
Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse:
Illinois Early Learning Project: www.illinoisearlylearning.org
Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies: www.inccrra.org
Illinois Parents: www.illinoisparents.org
Illinois Program to Provide Healthcare for All Kids: www.allkids.com
Illinois Resource Center: www.thecenterweb.org
Illinois State Board of Education (Early Childhood): www.isbe.state.il.us/earlychi
Kidsource Online: www.kidsource.com
Kohl/McCormick Early Childhood Teaching Awards: www.kohlmccormickawards.org
McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership www.cecl.nl.edu
Montessori www.montessori.edu American Montessori Society: www.amshq.org
National Afterschool Association: www.naaweb.org
National Association of Child Care Professionals: www.naccp.org
National Association for the Education of Young Children: www.naeyc.org
National Association of Elementary School Principals: www.naesp.org
National Black Child Development Institute: www.nbcdi.org
National Center for Children in Poverty: www.nccp.org
National Child Care Association: www.nccanet.org
National Child Care Information Center: www.nccic.org
National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center: www.nectac.org

National Head Start Association: www.nhsa.org
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development: www.nichd.nih.gov
National Institute for Early Education Research: www.nieer.org
National Kindergarten Alliance: www.nka.teach.org
National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education:
www.nrc.kids.org
Ounce of Prevention: www.ounceofprevention.org
Parents as Teachers: www.parentsasteachers.org
PreK Now: www.preknow.org
Preschool for All: www.isbe.state.il.us/earlychi
Prevent Child Abuse America: www.preventchildabuse.org
Reggio Emilio (RE approach to Preschool Education): www.reggioemiliaapproach.net
Strengthening Families IL: www.strengtheningfamiliesillinois.org
US Department of Education: www.ed.gov
Voices for Illinois Children: www.voices4kids.org
Zero to Three: www.zerotothree.org

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