



Passaic County Community College
Child Development Center
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Our Curriculum

- Our center is a planned environment for young children to learn in a way that is developmentally appropriate.
- It is designed to foster independence and allow the children to choose from a number of activities in learning centers.
- The materials are placed where the children can reach them and return them without help within a learning center.
- The children are encouraged to be responsible. After enjoying an activity they learn to return materials to their proper location before beginning a new activity.
- Because we know that young children learn best by using their senses and having first hand experiences, many hands-on activities are available to the children.
- The daily schedule allows large blocks of time so a child may fully experience an activity in a learning center.
- Staff members are child-centered and strive to help the children develop intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally.

THE CREATIVE CURRICULUM

The Child Development Center is presently implementing Diane Trister Dodge's (2002) "Creative Curriculum". Developmentally appropriated practice is the term that best describes the application of the curriculum. The Creative Curriculum derives from the educational theory and philosophy of Jean Piaget, on how children learn, Eric Erickson's stages of socio-emotional development as well as basic principles of child development.

According to current research, young children learn best by doing. The Creative Curriculum is a plan for learning that focuses on using the environment as a tool for active involvement, providing opportunities for children to learn and explore. Primarily the curriculum provides children with resources to practice newly developing insights and skills. The

application of the curriculum includes the active role of the teacher, the involvement of the family, and a respect for diversity, literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and the importance of technology. The curriculum focuses on each of these areas in ways that support and enhance children's academic success while maintaining a respect for the individual and unique ways in which children learn and grow (Trister-Dodge, 2002).

The Child Development Center dedicates itself to creating a learning structure that serves as a preventive adaptation to children's needs, offering an enriched curriculum that identifies and addresses symptoms before they become behavioral or learning issues. The classroom is an observational laboratory that provides solutions to potential disabilities. The Center's goal is to continue to expand upon methods of adaptation that modify the curriculum in order to maximize the child's involvement and participation. The underlying notion is that through an increase in the student's participation as an active learner, and more opportunities to interact socially with peers, the enhancement of development will occur naturally.

Modification of curriculum is an easy form of intervention that requires the teacher's active involvement in observation, planning and implementing changes that encourage more participation. Accomplishing this process involves modifying materials to allow the child to participate more independently in activities. Each step forward offers the success that provides the motivation and confidence necessary for growth.

The following is an outline of the Creative Curriculum (2002):

- ❑ The goal is to help children acquire social competence and skills needed to succeed in school life.
- ❑ There are 50 goals and objectives that enhance the development of social-emotional skills, physical growth, cognitive development, language and literacy.
- ❑ Classrooms set up include interest areas such as blocks, dramatic play, games, art, library, discovery, sand and water, music, movement, cooking, computers, and outdoor play.
- ❑ There is a respect and celebration for individual differences, which include; gender, behavioral styles, special interests, learning styles, life experiences, culture, and special needs.
- ❑ The focus is on fostering positive respectful interactions with peers, creating a partnership with families, and working together to support optimal development and learning.

- The curriculum consists of regular observation, guidance and assessment of the children.

Assessment includes: observations, individual child profiles, child progress, planning reports and class summaries

The Learning Environment

Each classroom is designed to invite the children to learn. There are learning centers. The children can move freely from one center to another. Each day the children meet other children and learn with them. The children can explore their classroom. They develop their skills through hands-on experiences. They organize their learning. They learn to work with others. They converse with their peers and teachers. They think of themselves as capable people.

Creative Arts

Through art media, the children are able to explore the various materials and be creative. The children learn that there are a variety of ways to use the materials, and that the end results of their efforts can be very different. With young children the process and not the product of their art is what is important. The children enjoy art at school because they learn that their ideas and thoughts as they create are important and accepted.

Art Center Contents: paints at the easel, large paper, brushes, aprons, crayons, markers, pencils, scissors, paper punches, glue, paste, collage materials (pieces of cloth, nature items, paper varying in texture, size and composition, etc.), construction paper, sponges, clay, play dough and a table and chairs at which to sit and be creative.

Music

The children learn to express themselves through music. They learn to hear and produce different tones, pitches and rhythms. As they listen they also learn to match tones and rhythms. They increase their vocabulary as they learn the words to new songs. They gain an appreciation of different kinds of music. They are introduced to a variety of different musical instruments through visiting musicians.

Music Center Contents: tape recorders, tapes, piano or keyboard, rhythm instruments, space to move to music, movement scarves or streamers.

Language Arts

- Children are encouraged to use language and develop communication skills needed for life. As you enter the center you are aware of children and staff interacting and conversing. Teachers model correct speech and are alert to assess individual needs. Teachers listen to the children and value their ideas. A rich environment of tape recorders, printed matter, visual aids, puppets, writing materials and other resources is provided to stimulate language development.
- Children use language as they play and interact with one another. In dramatic play, the children develop language competence as they role-play. Children are encouraged to listen to one another.
- Reading is an important part of the program. Both morning and afternoon group times are planned into the daily program which includes a literature experience. In addition, teachers read to children individually during the day. Teachers focus on skills needed for reading, such as auditory and visual discrimination, recognition of the sequential order of events, speech, attention span and interest in reading.
- Written language is also encouraged. Teachers take dictation and help the children write stories. Language experience charts are written about classroom experiences and events. Pens, pencils, markers and paper are provided to encourage the children to write
- Books related to each area and writing materials are available into each learning area.

Library and Literacy

The children learn the value of reading through experiences with people and books. The children learn about books. They learn that pages are read from left to right and stories progress from the front to the back of the book. They begin reading the pictures and they discover that books are enjoyable and informative. Their language skills grow as they increase their vocabularies and learn correct language patterns. They begin to create their own stories and tell them. They also use flannel graph and puppets for storytelling.

Library Center Contents: children's books, display rack, couches or beanbags to sit on, flannel board with figures, puppets, and adults to read to children and talk about books.

Blocks

Through building, the children learn to think, plan and solve problems as they work with their hands exploring and creating with the various shapes and sizes of blocks. They learn about relationships and quantities as they build. The children work, share, cooperate and converse while they play and learn with one another.

Block Center Contents: A large quantity of unit blocks on child size shelves, cardboard or foam blocks, accessories (cars, trucks, boats, animals, people, etc.), hollow blocks, boards, construction hats.

Mathematics & Science

Through science experiences, the children learn more about the world. They are encouraged to explore materials, ask questions, look for answers and make predictions. Experiments, pets, cooking and growing plants give the children experiences to think about and new words to try out.

Science Materials: Animals, cages, fish, aquariums, scales, magnets, magnifying tools, plants, soil, nature materials (nests, stones, leaves, feathers etc.), water play (table, sponges, sieves, buckets, droppers, etc.), materials for experiments (snow, seeds, etc.).

Mathematics learning is provided through activities in the daily program. Practical experiences are offered in classifying, comparing, counting, and simple measuring. Most mathematics experiences are done individually, recognizing each child's level of understanding. Using Piaget's theories as a basis for experiences offered, a child will be encouraged to think about number and quantities of objects in ways that are personally meaningful. Many direct experiences for the child to work with objects will be provided.

Math Materials: Unifix cubes, items for sorting and measuring, calculators, rulers for measuring, measuring cups, number peg boards, simple math games, materials for graphing.

Sand or Water Play

Young children enjoy and learn from both of these hands-on experiences. Through water-play the children experience the properties of wetness, fluidity, floating and sinking, volume, etc. Through sand-play the children discover how properties of a material can change when used in a dry or wet state. Both media provide valuable experiences for science, mathematics, socialization, and relaxation.

Sand or Water Play Center contents: plastic smocks, dish pans, water table, buckets, sieves, plastic containers, objects that sink or float, tubing, funnels, measuring cups, sponges, basters, spoons, shovels, boats, cars, trucks, dolls, etc.

Home and Community

The children have an opportunity to try out a variety of family and community roles and experiences familiar to them. They imitate things they see and hear (e.g., work, words, emotions, events). Through dramatic play the children are gaining social skills as they relate to their peers. They are better able to understand the feelings of others and they gain insights into their own abilities to relate to others.

Dramatic Play Area Contents: Furniture (chairs, table, storage cupboards, stove, sink, refrigerator, ironing board, mirror, carriage, bed), dress up materials (clothes, hats, shoes, jewelry, keys), dolls, pots and pans, pretend food, cash register, tools, paper, pencils, etc., magazines, and cook books. Multicultural clothing, dolls, and materials are incorporated into the dramatic play area.

Toys and Games

Table activities offer the children an opportunity to develop thinking skills as they plan and solve problems working with materials. Puzzles offer the children experiences with hand-eye coordination and they help the children to see relationships between the parts and a whole picture. Children develop strategies of using color, shape or lines to fit pieces in the correct position. Matching games help the children to see relationships between things and to learn that things go together. Construction materials help develop motor skills, thinking skills and social skills as they often lend themselves to creative projects done in cooperation with other children. Children also engage in sorting, classifying and counting activities with many of the manipulative materials.

Area Contents: Shelves, puzzles, puzzle rack, pegs, peg boards, duplo block, Lego blocks, stacking toys, nesting toys, beads, table blocks, parquetry blocks, etc.

Physical Development

Opportunities are provided to encourage both fine and large motor development. Indoors the majority of experiences provide for fine motor development as the children work with manipulative toys (i.e. art materials, blocks, puzzles, etc.). Materials offered vary in size and

complexity to meet individual learner's needs. Some indoor space is available for large motor development when the children are unable to use the outdoor play area. In this area more active play and exercise occur. A parachute, tumbling mats, balls, a slide, and other equipment are included.

Outdoors a play area is provided for fresh air and recreation. A sandbox, garden, climbing equipment and a variety of accessories are available.

The Importance of Play

Through play, the children learn. They exercise and test their bodies. The children handle, taste, smell and observe many materials. They talk and listen to their peers, using language that is meaningful to their own experience. They act things out and try out roles, reflecting on their life experiences. They learn to take turns and share materials with others. They solve problems in their own way. They learn about being accepted for who they are.

Meeting the Needs of Second Language Learners

The Creative Curriculum addresses and incorporates the needs of second-language learners. In order to support the needs of second language learners, each classroom is staffed with bilingual teachers and/or teacher assistants. All centers and materials are labeled in the home languages of the children in the classroom, as well as with pictures. Multi-cultural and multi-lingual books are read in the classroom and available in the library area. Songs and music from children's home languages are also played and sung in class. We also encourage families to participate in the classroom to share their linguistic and cultural traditions whenever possible.