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Our Curriculum and Areas of Learning

Emergent Curriculum

Our **emergent curriculum**, guided by the child's desires, focuses on traditional cognitive, physical, and social/emotional developmental milestones and also provides ample opportunities for children to participate in a variety of creative, open-ended, exploratory activities that support growth in the areas of early math, language, writing and science.

Our **program** implements a program that uses projects and provocations to provide children a variety of open-ended activities. The focus is on the process of learning and discovery more than the product. The process of *how the child learns* through the materials made available to them makes the learning outcome more meaningful and memorable.

Our **learning environment** is thoughtfully planned and allows for the teachers to seek out and find what interests the children and what strengths the children are showing. Then, the teachers are able to build on these interests and strengths to assist the children in making the best possible choices each day.

Children learn naturally through intentional play experiences — either self-directed, peer directed or adult guided — but children who are provided extended time for exploration will gain a higher level of independence, the ability to plan their own activities, and the chance to find and develop what they are truly interested in. Our curriculum is constructed to:

- Provide opportunities for the children to think together, to develop planning skills and experience deeper levels of thought to promote critical thinking skills necessary to meet and surpass developmental milestones.
- Promote the development of more advanced social skills through experiences that foster self-help and communication to guide children in becoming respectful and caring to others and their environment and to better help them navigate social and emotional issues.
- Support children's free will, creativity, and imagination while providing them with a sense of responsibility and trust.
- Encourage self-harmony and joyful, healthy play which leads to a higher ability to learn and retain knowledge and nurtures a love of learning and helps to prepare children for life itself.

Components of our Emergent Curriculum

Projects

Project-based learning is a teaching method that supports children's development by allowing them to investigate and respond to their own interests. **Project ideas** stem from both the teacher's and children's questions, problems, or curiosities which allows for authentic learning experiences. The children use their entire environment to investigate, ask questions, make decisions, give and receive feedback and display their project work for others.

Provocations

A **provocation** is a specific, open-ended activity set up by the teacher and designed to provide children another means of expression. Provocations are displayed in a simple yet inviting way to provoke curiosity, questions, and ideas. They can be designed to expand on an interest or project in a class and are also a great way to introduce new concepts that help the children meet developmental milestones.

Open-Ended Materials

Open-ended materials are any materials that can be moved, carried, combined, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. They allow children to play in many different ways and on many different levels.

There are no specific set of rules for open-ended materials as they are implemented into our program as a means to empower the children's' creativity.

Environments that include these types of materials are infinitely more stimulating and engaging as they promote and support imaginative play which allows children to develop their own ideas and explore their world.

We provide an array of age-appropriate, open-ended materials for use in all centers in the classrooms such as stones, stumps, sand, fabric, wood, sticks, balls, buckets, baskets, crates, boxes, stones, gems, corks, shells and pinecones.

Relationships and Interaction

Our teachers are active, engaged participants in the children's daily activities, creating and supporting **cooperative relationships**. They expand the children's knowledge by asking open-ended questions related to the content of the activities and ensure that there are multiple opportunities to make the most of teachable moments.

Documentation

We document children's learning by **visually displaying** their words, photographs, projects, and various works. This brings honor to the children's efforts and allows them to have a strong connection to their experiences and environment.

Areas of Learning

Blocks and Construction

Blocks and construction encourage social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. They also provide children with the opportunity to exercise a variety of skills that will help them later in life such as problem solving, symbolic thinking, spatial awareness, and mathematical skills.

There are six stages of block building and knowing an understanding these stages allow us to ensure the proper, developmentally appropriate implementation of blocks within each classroom.

- Carrying (~1-2 years of age)
- Building (~2-3 years of age)
- Bridging (~3 years of age)
- Enclosures (~4 years of age)
- Complex Structures (4-5 years of age)
- Complex Structures with elaborate dramatic play (4-5 years of age)

Sensory

Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates the senses and for young children their senses are their most familiar way to explore, process, and understand the world around them.

We provide intentional sensory opportunities that facilitate exploration and naturally encourage children to explore.

We communicate with the children about what they are observing and sensing, building their language skills and supporting their cognitive development through meaningful experiences.

Art

It is not about the product! **Art** is an amazing medium for children to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas. We offer children opportunities to participate in art throughout the day, every day.

Participating in art develops children cognitively, physically, and socially-emotionally. It aids in the development of motor skills, provides opportunities for language development, and encourages children to make decisions, be innovative, and to express themselves.

There are typically three stages of art development in early childhood:

- The scribble stage (1-3 years old)
- The pre-schematic stage (3-4 years old)
- The schematic stage (5-6 years old)

Math

We nurture the development of **early math** skills and ensure children are meeting the age-appropriate math milestones by emphasizing a hands-on approach. We make math real, relevant and relatable in each age group by encouraging children to interact with open-ended math material while they play making learning math visual and fun.

Math for young children is about shapes, sizes, order, patterns, comparisons, and measurement. Processes like counting, comparing, sorting and estimating help children learn about the world around them. We invite children to explore our tangible math activities allowing them to make discoveries, test theories and practice new skills.

Language and Writing

Children are communicators and use language as a way to discover new things, ask questions, and reflect on experiences. We listen to our children with respect and believe that their questions and observations provide an opportunity for us to collaborate, learn together, and to build relationships.

We view **language and writing** as useful tools and not as academic exercises practiced through rote learning. We naturally encourage children's language development through real experiences.

We provide a literacy-rich environment by:

- Including print in the form of labels, signs, books and magazines
- Documenting and displaying children's work with a mixture of photographs and print
- Incorporating literacy-rich manipulatives, writing materials and language props in all centers for children to incorporate into their play/projects
- Including relevant books and printed materials in project work, art, provocations, and other areas of interest
- Ensuring access to materials that encourage music and movement
- Enjoying library time while modeling literacy behaviors through story time, reading to find answers to their questions, and exploring storytelling baskets
- Incorporating writing through the use journals, sign-in sheets, post cards, thank-you cards, instructions and documentation

Science

Children have an innate curiosity about the world and we encourage that curiosity by making science a part of the children's daily experiences inside and outside of the classrooms. We explore a variety of **science topics** that include sound, lights and shadows, colors, magnets, weather, animals, rocks, plants and so much more.

Children have the opportunity to enjoy our outdoor environment that is rich with nature – they observe lizards, squirrels, toads, snails, blue jays and cardinals, worms, and even turtles love to make their appearance!