

Preschool Disabilities Curriculum
August 15, 2003

Preschool Philosophy

This holistic-based pre-school curriculum was designed to include but not be limited to the New Jersey Early Childhood Expectations/Standards in order to better prepare our young children to meet the New Jersey's Core Curriculum Standards (CCCS) when they enter Kindergarten.

An integral part of a pre-school child's learning is play. Opportunities for exploration and play are provided to foster the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of each child. As teachers, we are the facilitators of a developmentally appropriate program by designing and implementing learning centers, projects and/or thematic units that provide learning opportunities for children. These hands-on activities, are both planned and spontaneous focusing on individuals or small groups of children.

Pre-schoolers with disabilities require specially designed activities that will enhance primary skills and develop language and communication skills. Because children develop physically, emotionally and intellectually at different rates the curriculum must be responsive and anticipate differences in abilities and interests, and embrace and accommodate the cultural diversity among children. At the same time, however, teachers and therapists must guide the children to a common level of preparedness for kindergarten and beyond.

By designing a program that supports the development of the whole child we lead our students to the discovery of positive attitudes about themselves and others and to an enduring enthusiasm for learning.

Core Curriculum Content Standards

Currently, Preschool Disabilities does not have Core Curriculum Standards. New Jersey's Department of Education has created an Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality document to assist in providing early childhood educators with a foundation to build upon in creating developmentally appropriate learning environments.

Workplace Readiness Standards

The Standards listed below are integrated into the curriculum throughout other content areas and the various domains presented.

Standard 2: All students will use technology, information and other tools.

Standard 3: All students will use critical thinking decision-making and problem solving Skills.

Standard 5: All students will apply safety principles.

Suggested Activities for the following domains: Social/Emotional Development, Creative Arts, Health, Safety and Physical Education (Including Kinesthetic Learning Activities), Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies (Including Interpersonal Learning Activities) and World Languages:

Social/Emotional Development

Social/emotional development is connected to physical and cognitive development; therefore, young children enrolled in pre-school programs require a welcoming environment. It should be safe, secure, accessible, organized, comfortable, predictable and consistent. Understanding and acceptance of one's strengths, weakness and emotions as well as interests, goals and values provide the foundation for all future skills.

Expectation 1: All children will develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 1.1 Engage in play to explore relationships with peers.
- 1.2 Recognize and appreciate self-worth and uniqueness.
- 1.3 Build a sense of community with teachers, aides, therapists, bus drivers, parents and school staff.
- 1.4 Acknowledge areas of strength, weakness, need and ability.

Expectation 2: All children will develop relationships with peers through play, including conflict resolution skills and sensitivity to the feelings, interests and needs of others.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 2.1 Set own limits.
- 2.2 Identify opportunities and demonstrate willingness to share.
- 2.3 Express feelings appropriately and respect those of others.
- 2.4 Develop and maintain friendships.
- 2.5 Develop group rules. Become self-disciplined, self-guided and/or self-directed.
- 2.6 Observe game rules and procedures.
- 2.7 Associate constructive behaviors with positive consequences.
- 2.8 Develop leadership, follower/helper and collaborative skills.
- 2.9 Develop and maintain friendships.

Expectation 3: All children will demonstrate affection and appropriate physical contact.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 3.1 Recognize and show affection through words and actions.
- 3.2 Experience stories, songs and poems that will reinforce cooperation and helpfulness between and among classmates.
- 3.3 Know the difference between good touch and bad touch.

Expectation 4: All children will develop resilience to stressful situations.

- 5.1 Dictate stories expressing feelings
- 5.2 Practice problem solving with other children independent of the teacher.
- 5.3 Engage in activities to release stress (e.g. sand-play, water-play, music, physical therapy swing, etc.)
- 5.4 Participate in songs, finger-plays, games and stories to ease transition (e.g. transition song).

Expectation 6: All children will develop a beginning interest in self-help skills.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 6.1 Cooperate in dressing and undressing.
- 6.2 Understand the function of bathroom facilities.
- 6.3 Spoon-feed his/herself with little spilling.
- 6.4 Discriminate between edible substances and inedible ones.
- 6.5 Cooperate in cleanup.
- 6.6 Is responsible for own possessions and materials.
- 6.7 Follow school routines and class schedule.

Expectation 7: All children will be able to express their feelings.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 7.1 Choose pictures or picture communication cards to express feelings.
- 7.2 Listen to stories to identify emotions and express feelings.
- 7.3 Interpret and represent experiences through puppetry, drama, art, writing, music, stories or conversation.
- 7.4 Have meaningful conversations and express feeling with responsive adults.

Expectation 8: All children will develop social skills appropriate to the age.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 8.1 Interact with peers to experiment with understanding the feelings of others.
- 8.2 Cooperate and take turns.
- 8.3 Negotiate.
- 8.4 Empathize.
- 8.5 Explore.
- 8.6 Articulate preferences and accept compromise.
- 8.7 Offer positive attention to others.

Creative Arts:

In the Pre-School classroom Creative Arts will be integrated into all of the curriculum areas to develop an appreciation for the arts and as a way to conduct classroom activities to meet the expectations in all content areas. Creative Arts can promote curiosity, verbal and nonverbal expression and can be used for cultural awareness and diversity.

The critical component of Creative Art in young children is the process rather than the result or end product. Self- motivation, expression and independence develop through concrete, hands-on activities in an environment that stimulates creativity through art, music, dramatic play and dance.

Expectation 1: All children will develop an appreciation for music and visual self-expression.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 1.1 Explore, listen and experience a variety of music.(e.g. singing, fingerplays, instruments)
- 1.2 Appreciating music as an accompaniment to movement, developing gross motor skills (e.g. dancing, marching, jumping, galloping, skipping, etc.)
- 1.3 View performance of dance, music, puppetry or drama through assembly programs, visitors, field trips or other classroom performances.)

Expectation 2: All children will be able to express themselves through dramatic play.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 2.1 Explore learning centers that provide props and costumes to develop imaginative play.
- 2.2 Discover dramatic play through puppetry, story telling, class play productions, etc.
- 2.3 Explore role-playing using critical thinking and imaginative skills to problem solve.
- 2.4 Create play structures using blocks.

Expectation 3: All children will explore through their tactile and visual senses the use and application of art materials.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 3.1 Create, discuss and evaluate visual arts in a variety of media including; paint (easel, finger-paint, sponges, pudding, etc.) clay, playdoh or theraputty, various textured paper, crayons, markers, chalk, scissors, glue, etc., wood creations with hammer, nails and paint. Independently explore objects, materials and areas in the classroom.

Health, Safety, Physical Education/Kinesthetic Learning

Health, safety, physical education and kinesthetic learning in the pre-school classroom encourages children to think, experience, explore and make connections to enhance each child's sense of control and competence as a learner at the child's developmental level. This area should be integrated throughout the content areas including indoor and outdoor activities, play that is planned and spontaneous. This area extends the children's knowledge of themselves, those around them and their world or culture.

Expectation 1: All children will develop hygiene and nutritional skills.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 1.1 Demonstrate awareness and growth in the areas of sleep/rest, exercise, toileting, personal hygiene, and oral health.

Expectation 2: All children will develop the ability to make personal decisions and appropriate choices during group play that promote cooperation and socialization skills.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 2.1 Solve problems and cooperate in group activities and games.
- 2.2 Show respect for the needs of others and make friends.
- 2.3 Begin to control one's own impulses.
- 2.4 Take initiative in group activities.
- 2.5 Help other members in group play situations.
- 2.6 Experience sharing and taking turns.

Expectation 3: All children will identify potentially harmful objects, substances, and activities and respond appropriately.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 3.1 Respond appropriately to emergency situations (i.e. participate in fire drills.)
- 3.2 Develop the knowledge to stay away from strangers.
- 3.4 Recognize hazard symbols.

Kinesthetic/Gross Motor

There is a pronounced relationship between body kinesthetic development and the acquisition of academic skills. At the pre-school level teachers and classroom aides work with the Occupational Therapist and the Physical Therapist to enhance body kinesthetic development in all children. Individual therapy sessions are provided as necessary.

Expectation 4: All children will develop coordination, balance, and strength through gross motor, sensory integration, and perceptual awareness.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 4.1 Develop perceptual awareness and sensory integration growth in:
 - a. body awareness
 - b. spatial and directional awareness
 - c. coordination
 - d. balance, rhythm
 - e. imitation of body movements
- 4.2 Develop gross motor skills:
 - a. controlled body movement
 - b. body stretch and stamina
 - c. body coordination
 - d. body flexibility
 - e. large muscle strength and coordination
 - f. Participation in independent and group games.

Language Arts Literacy:

The critical importance of language based learning is evident in virtually all aspects of life and learning. Since early childhood is the period of the most rapid language development, it is imperative that young children have a variety of literacy and language experiences throughout the day in environments that are rich in language and print. Literacy is composed of the listening, speaking, writing, reading and viewing components.

Expectation 1: All students will engage in active- listening and pre-reading skill activities in a variety of situations.

During Pre-school, each student will have opportunities to:

1.1 Listen and respond to a variety of preschool level reading materials.

1.2 Understand fundamental print concepts:

- a. Introduction to upper/lowercase letters, beginning with child's name.
- b. Listen for similarity in sounds through rhymes.
- c. Directionality

1.3 Differentiate purposes for listening/reading such as enjoyment, information.

1.4 expand vocabulary

1.5 dictate own stories and recognize own words when read

1.6 create pictures to depict story

1.7 use prior knowledge to increase comprehension

1.8 select own reading materials

1.9 distinguish between real and make-believe

1.10 share ideas and reactions to reading

1.11 extend appreciation and understanding of reading materials through drama, Art and music.

1.12 listen to and follow directions

Expectation 2: Children will engage in activities that will strengthen speaking skills.

During Pre-school each child will have opportunities to:

2.1 strengthen oral muscles through motor exercises.

2.2 contribute to discussions.

2.3 participate in songs, dramatic role-play and nursery rhymes.

2.4 express thoughts in complete sentences

2.5 tell and recount stories from presentations and pictures.

2.6 make and respond to introductions.

2.7 talk with others to explore and resolve problems.

2.8 participate in discussions as speaker and listener.

2.9 speak before a group.

2.10 conceive and ask appropriate questions.

Expectation 3: Children will engage in activities that promote the acquisition of emergent writing skills.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 3.1 Experiment with a variety of writing activities (e.g. drawing, scribbling, letter-like forms, using invented spelling and conventional letterforms.)
- 3.2 Experiment with a variety of writing tools.
- 3.3 Write (scribble) messages as part of playful activity.
- 3.4 Ask adults to write.
- 3.5 Observe adults writing for a variety of purposes (i.e. lists dictated stories and charts).

Expectation 4: Children will engage in activities that offer the opportunity to view, comprehend and use non-textual visual information.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 4.1 View age appropriate books or videos, alone or in a small group.
- 4.2 Follow a story on audiotape or CD.
- 4.3 View icons on computer screens, when available.
- 4.4 Use appropriate and interactive software programs, when available.
- 4.5 Discuss pictures in favorite children's books and talk about what is happening.

Mathematics

Providing a developmentally appropriate program for preschoolers requires that opportunities to learn mathematical skills in a context that is meaningful is required. Along with the previous domains a play-based, child-centered environment needs to be developed to insure that opportunities for students to talk, write and sing about mathematical concepts is provided. A wide variety of manipulatives and tools need to be accessible with hands-on experiences that are relevant to real-life situations in order to help all children learn to enjoy mathematics.

Expectation 1: All students will demonstrate growth in observing, comparing and contrasting.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 1.1 Create sets using concepts such as more than, less than, as many as.
- 1.2 Explore part and whole relationships.
- 1.3 Explore objects with respect to length, height, capacity and size.
- 1.4 Explore time and distance.
- 1.5 Explore temperature (i.e. use descriptive words, hot/cold)
- 1.6 Be introduced to simple formal measurement standards.
- 1.7 Explore estimation (i.e. how many napkins are needed for snack).
- 1.8 Participate in creating pictograph charts and/or bar graphs using everyday experiences.

Expectation 2: All students will develop knowledge of sorting and classification.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 2.1 classify groups or sets by sorting and matching according to property or attributes.
- 2.2 Extend classifying by exploring environmental objects as living/nonliving.

Expectation 3: All children will communicate mathematically through emergent writing, spoken communication, manipulative and visual forms of expression sequence and order.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 3.1 Copy, extend or record linear patterns using a variety of manipulatives.
- 3.2 Describe order of events.
- 3.3 Recognize patterns and sequences in nature and music extending knowledge beyond the math center.

Expectation 5: All children will develop knowledge of spatial sense and geometric shapes.

During Pre-school each child will have opportunities to:

- 5.1 Explore and examine basic shapes.
- 5.2 Recognize and distinguish geometric shapes and their properties.
- 5.3 Explore shapes using models and pictures.
- 5.4 Understand and use positional words (i.e. down, next to and behind).

Expectation 6: All children will manipulate objects to explore numeration.

During Pre-school each child will have opportunities to:

- 6.1 Understand and use concepts of first and last.
- 6.2 Show number sense (i.e. show me five beads).
- 6.3 Experience 1 to 1 correspondences through integrated daily school routine (i.e. set table, pass out paper, crayons, etc).
- 6.4 Count, recognize and use numbers (1-10).

Expectation 7: All children will experience mathematical problem solving through hands-on activities.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

- 7.1 Develop and apply problem-solving strategies independently and cooperatively.
- 7.2 Look for and give clues.
- 7.3 Make predictions.
- 7.4 See spatial relationships in terms of shape and size (i.e. putting puzzles together)
- 7.5 Fit one ordered set of objects into another (i.e. match cup with saucer).

Science

Building upon a child's natural sense of curiosity and wonder is essential for science in the early childhood classroom. Children are born scientists, constantly testing new hypothesis through exploration and experimentation. Young children do this through play. It is important to provide a variety of materials and opportunities for children to develop skills. This curriculum focuses on the five senses in order for children to develop an understanding of scientific principles. The use of open-ended questions and a variety of multi-sensory experiences should be employed. Play enables children to progress along the developmental sequence.

Expectation 1: All children will discover the five senses and their uses while developing sensory awareness.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

1.1 Explore the sense of sight, smell, taste, touch and sound through a variety of developmentally appropriate teacher planned activities.

Expectation 2: All children will make observations and simple predictions of experimental outcomes.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

2.1 Look for and give clues to predict an outcome.

2.3 Make predictions of expected outcomes (e.g. mixing colors will create a new color).

2.4 Observe results.

2.5 Discuss observations and results through verbal expression or for non-verbal students, gestures sign, or picture communication.

Expectation 3: All students will develop awareness of physical science by using their five senses to explore the different states of matter.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

3.1 Experiment with solids and liquids. (E.g., melting ice, following cooking or baking sequences by adding solid or liquid ingredients).

Expectation 4: All children will develop awareness of Life Science by exploring living and nonliving things.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

4.1 Observe and identify basic life- cycles (e.g., a chick hatches from an egg, a caterpillar turns into a butterfly).

4.2 Discover differences between living and nonliving things.

4.3 Understand the basic needs of a living organism (e.g., food, shelter, water, and sunlight).

4.4 Become familiar with common animals and their habitats (e.g., farm pets, rainforest, zoo, etc.).

4.6 Explore plant life and develop an understanding of its sequence (e.g., seed, plant)

Expectation 5: All children will discover the properties of magnets.

During Pre-school each child will have opportunities to:

5.1 Discover that magnets attract only certain metals through the use of objects carefully selected by the teacher.

Expectation 6: All children will develop an awareness of Earth Science by investigating the earth's properties.

During Pr-school each child will have opportunities to:

6.1 Identify weather characteristic (e.g., sunny, rainy, cloudy, snowy, windy)

6.2 Develop communication skills by discussing the weather and making choices through verbal expression or for nonverbal children, the use of sign, gestures, or picture communication.

6.3 Identify seasonal changes (e.g., leaves falling from trees, changes in clothing, etc.).

6.4 Develop an awareness of the earth's surfaces (e.g., water, mountains and soil).

Expectation 7: All children will explore the components of the solar system.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

7.1 Identify the basic components (e.g., moon, sun and stars)

7.2 Differentiate between the day and night sky.

Expectation 8: All children will develop awareness and actively participate in caring for their environment.

8.1 Understand and participate in recycling and cleanup of litter.

8.2 Take care of personal belongings.

8.3 Take care of preschool equipment.

Social Studies/Interpersonal Learning

Interpersonal intelligence facilitates the social interaction necessary for success in school and in life. At the pre-school level children learn the importance of helping, understanding and respecting others. It begins with an understanding of themselves in their family and extends to develop an understanding of the role of the larger community. Thematic units help to integrate this area into all areas of the curriculum. The classroom environment should reinforce those skills and concepts which encourage good citizenship and develop the child's capacity to participate in a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

Expectation 1: All children will develop self-awareness and interpersonal relationship skills.

1.1 Practice social skills and pro-social behaviors.

1.2 Develop healthy self-concept and self-esteem.

1.3 Exercise responsibility for personal belongings.

1.4 Develop and practice independent behaviors.

1.5 Develop and practice positive group behaviors.

1.6 Develop appreciation and respect for individual similarities and differences.

1.7 Demonstrate respect for people and property.

1.8 Establish and obey rules.

1.9 Resolve conflicts and communicate emotions in socially acceptable ways.

Expectation 2: All children will develop an awareness of family and family traditions.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

2.1 Identify family group members and their roles

2.2 Identify one's own role in the family.

2.3 Discuss and participate in seasonal celebrations and holidays.

Expectation 3: All children will develop community and career awareness.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

3.1 Recognize community workers and increase awareness of the jobs they do (e.g., visit places of work, talk to workers and invite workers to visit, invite parents to share what they do).

Expectation 4: All children will develop an awareness of the economic process and consumerism.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

4.1 Dramatize buying, selling a manufacturing (e.g., provide a store center, cash register, etc.).

4.2 Make real decisions about snack foods and other small purchases.

4.3 Develop awareness about the use of currency in society (e.g., provide real and play money in centers, set up time the children can make mini purchases, etc.).

Expectation 5: All children will explore their own and other cultures.

During Pre-school, all children will have opportunities to:

5.1 Develop an awareness of their own and other cultures.

5.2 Develop awareness of cultural similarities and differences (e.g., observe performances and eat foods).

5.3 Develop awareness of other cultures by celebrating cultural holiday, celebrations, customs, etc. (e.g., invite family members to share with students a variety of food, music, and customs).

Expectation 6: All children will develop an awareness of environmental issues.

During Pre-school, each child will have opportunities to:

6.1 Practice conservation.

6.2 Develop an understanding of the impact of pollution.

6.3 Recycle within the classroom.

World Languages

A child uses language to express feelings and communicate needs. The environment for learning language needs to be natural and rich with opportunities for social interaction to promote the development of language and communication skills. Language learning in the preschool classroom focuses on the development of listening and speaking skills and cultural awareness through concrete experiences. Children communicate in simple face-to-face interactions with classmates, teachers, family and visitors.

Language/Communication is often a weak area for preschoolers with disabilities and is always integrated throughout a developmentally appropriate program. Expanding a child's knowledge to include other cultural activities and awareness that different languages are spoken enhances their understanding and tolerance for others.

Expectation 1: All children will experience language activities in an at least one language other than English, including sign language

During Preschool, each child will have opportunities to:

- 1.1 Listen to conversations and stories in other languages.
- 1.2 Participate in simple songs, rhymes and poems.
- 1.3 Be exposed to basic sign language through songs, stories, daily routines, etc.

Expectation 2: All children will participate in activities that initiate simple greeting and introductions in other languages.

During preschool, all children will have opportunities to:

- 2.1 Develop awareness that the language being spoken is a language used in the broader community.

Expectation 3: All children will participate in cultural activities and celebrations to develop an awareness of diverse cultures.

During Preschool, each child will have opportunities to:

- 1.1 Participate in appropriate seasonal cultural activities and celebrations as planned by the teacher and/or family.

Instructional Strategies

Preschool teachers utilize a wide range of developmentally appropriate instructional strategies that include but are not limited to:

- Preparing the classroom environment for maximum exploration and interaction.
- Referring to life experiences as a learning basis.
- Providing opportunities for learning through child initiated play allowing for limited teacher intervention to guide through next level of learning.
- Providing opportunities for integration of various disciplines in meaningful contexts.
- Recognizing the importance of multi-sensory learning experiences.
- Corroborating with therapists, general education teachers, and others to enhance themes or activities.
- Providing opportunities to develop social skills and solve interpersonal problems.
- Recognizing play as an appropriate method of learning.
- Directing, supporting and facilitating as needed.
- Utilizing available technology to enhance instruction, assessments, and physical accommodations.

Work Habits

Integrated age appropriate work habits for preschool children include:

- Active Listening/Speaking skills
- Following Directions
- Organization and Time Management
- Self-help skills

Evaluation/Assessment of Students

Assessment is the process of observing, recording, and documenting the work children do and how they do it. The purpose of assessment is to help teachers determine appropriate classroom activities for each child. Assessment should be ongoing, authentic and cumulative.

Young children begin their preschool training at different chronological ages, with diverse prior experiences and at various rates of social and emotional maturation.

It is inappropriate to expect very young children to take pencil and paper tests. The preschool environment is ideally suited to multiple, authentic forms of assessment, which measure both the process and product of instruction. Such ongoing and frequent forms of assessment may include but are not limited to:

- Parent-teacher conferences
- Formal and informal observations
- Dialogue between teacher and child
- Shared student reflection
- Projects in various media
- Video or audio tapes of special projects, presentations or routine activities and behaviors that document understanding, growth and progress
- Teacher check lists and narratives that document such attributes as:
 - Motivation
 - Responsibility
 - Confidence
 - Problem solving
 - Teamwork
 - Appreciation and tolerance of diversity
 - Positive work habits
 - Development in multiple intelligences
- Portfolios of routine and best work
- Audiotape of child speaking, singing, etc.
- Self-portraits and other pictures

Evaluation/Assessment of Curriculum

- This course of study will be evaluated/assessed by instructional staff during the first year of implementation for the purpose of necessary revision at the end of the first year. In addition, this course of study will be reviewed according to the Five-Year Curriculum Review schedule. Assessment of this curriculum should take into account but not be limited to:
 - The degree to which the program meets the various needs of children.

- The degree to which the program maintains an effective integrated curriculum. Within and beyond the classroom.
- The degree to which the program responds to and articulates the needs of the school, community and preschoolers.
- The degree to which the program embraces available and emerging technology.
- The degree to which the program effectively adapts to societal change.

Resources/Bibliography

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