

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

This section is used and adapted from the Preschool Curriculum written by the Diocese of Phoenix with thanks for their help.

The curriculum for children under the age of 5 years old must be concerned with the child's spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and sensorimotor development. The underlying instructional strategy is the use of organized and free-play activities that are intended to provide opportunities for the child to interact, explore, and relate successfully in his/her environment.

The goals of early childhood education include:

1. Assisting the child in developing a positive self-image in relationship to a loving God.
2. Assisting the child in mastering expressive and receptive language skills that are necessary for the development of problem-solving and thinking abilities.
3. Assisting the child in the development of sensory-perceptual skills.
4. Assisting the child in developing gross and fine motor skills.
5. Assisting the child in acquiring interpersonal skills necessary for learning about self and interacting effectively with peers and adults.
6. Assisting the child in acquiring interpersonal skills necessary for achieving personal autonomy.
7. Assisting the child to grow socially and emotionally.
8. Assisting the parents in their role as primary educator of children.

These attitudes, taken and adapted from *Teaching in the Preschool* by Jeri E. Brophy, Thomas L. Good and Shari E. Nedler, are the necessary conditions for supporting the development of the young child.

1. Concern for the child's health and safety.
2. Positive interaction with adults.
3. A positive emotional climate that fosters the development of trust.
4. An environment where children's needs are responded to and respected.
5. Adults who respond appropriately to the young child's behavior.
6. A safe and child oriented environment that encourages the child's exploration.
7. An environment that assists the child in confirming and predicting events.
8. An environment that provides a variety of meaningful cultural experiences.
9. An environment rich in play materials that supports the development of sensorimotor processes.
10. An environment that provides an appropriate match for the child's level of development.
11. An environment directed by adults who plan and develop objectives for the child.

THREE-YEAR OLDS

Language Arts

Goal: *To assist the child in mastering expressive and receptive language skills that are necessary for the development of problem solving and thinking skills.*

Three-year olds are learning to:

- recognize, name, and describe simple objects and pictures.
- describe simple experiences and events.
- recognize basic functions of objects.
- identify self by name.
- pantomime short stories.
- name three objects in a picture.
- develop understanding and use of vocabulary related to classroom routines i.e. snack time, restroom, etc.
- develop vocabulary for social communication and interaction through cooperative games, discussing experiences, singing games, and field trips.

Sensory-Perceptual Skills

Goal: *To assist the child in developing sensory-perceptual skills.*

Three-year olds are learning to:

- match, sort, and name basic colors, shapes, and sizes.
- sequence objects by size.
- identify positions of objects.
- classify objects by general categories.
- duplicate three-dimensional designs with objects, i.e. beads, pegboards, inch cubes, etc.
- recognize similarities and differences in a variety of objects.
- name a sequence of a least two objects from memory.
- be alert to and respond to the presence and/or absence of sound, i.e. music, environmental sound.
- locate the direction of sound.
- recognize gross differences in sound characteristics, i.e. loud or soft, fast or slow.
- reproduce a simple beat sequence.
- discriminate and match environmental sounds with pictures.
- listen to and state the basic content of a simple story.
- follow a series of two directions with the appropriate motor actions.
- imitate short lyrical poems and/or songs.

THREE-YEAR OLDS - CONTINUED

Motor Skills

Goal: *To assist the child in developing both gross and fine motor skills.*

Three-year olds are learning to:

- imitate simple body movements and positions.
- walk forward and backward and change direction on the floor and walking board
- move spontaneously to music.
- follow a simple walking pattern.
- roll, catch, and bounce a ball.
- perform a given action quickly or slowly.
- perform a given action from verbal instructions with one or two actions in each sequence
- move through a simple obstacle course.
- use clothing frames appropriately, i.e. buttons, snaps, and zippers.
- spoon and pour beans, grains, etc.
- cut simple patterns such as fringe or a straight line with scissors.
- manipulate equipment, i.e. line up chairs, stack objects, etc.

Interpersonal Skills

Goal: *To assist the child in acquiring interpersonal skills necessary for interacting effectively with peers and adults.*

Objectives related to the acquisition of interpersonal skills extend from ages 3 to 5 along a developmental continuum. A child of this age is learning to:

- cooperate with others in the classroom by following rules, by helping to establish rules, and by learning to modify rules when necessary.
- share and take turns.
- provide help to other children when asked to do so.
- engage in discussions and activities that involve adults and other children in the classroom.
- play cooperatively.
- help on simple tasks such as cleanup, serving snacks, etc.
- verbalize feelings related to events that arise in the classroom.

THREE-YEAR OLDS - CONTINUED

Characteristics of the Young Child

| <u>Emotional Characteristics</u> | <u>Emotional Needs</u> |
|--|---|
| <p>We know that three-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Are developing self-esteem. <input type="checkbox"/> Are developing self-control and self-restraint. <input type="checkbox"/> Are very curious. <input type="checkbox"/> Are subject to whining, bouts of anger and frustration. <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate attachment to parent. | <p>To satisfy these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Give genuine praise and encouragement. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide warm, positive atmosphere where child can express feelings appropriately. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer hands-on learning opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a consistent environment; clearly define limits. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide an opportunity to act out family roles through creative play. |

| <u>Social Characteristics</u> | <u>Social Needs</u> |
|---|---|
| <p>We know that three-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Engage in some parallel play. They play near someone, but may not interact. <input type="checkbox"/> Are sociable, enjoy the company of peers. <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy imitative play. <input type="checkbox"/> Thrive on attention from adults. <input type="checkbox"/> Can help with basic housekeeping tasks. | <p>To satisfy these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Provide space both for individual activities and opportunities to learn to play with someone. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide group activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage use of role-playing activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Set aside some time to be alone with each child. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage them to help put toys away. |

THREE YEAR OLDS - CONTINUED

Characteristics of the Young Child - continued

| <u>Cognitive Characteristics</u> | <u>Cognitive Needs</u> |
|--|---|
| <p>We know that three-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Have an attention span of about 3 to 5 minutes.<input type="checkbox"/> Function at Piaget's pre-conceptual level.<input type="checkbox"/> Are talkative in a familiar environment.<input type="checkbox"/> Learn by doing, require tactile involvement.<input type="checkbox"/> Are beginning to develop problem-solving techniques. | <p>To satisfy these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Plan short-term activities.<input type="checkbox"/> Design learning activities with concrete methods, not abstract goals.<input type="checkbox"/> Provide lots of sharing time, encourage conversation between children.<input type="checkbox"/> Manipulatives should be plentiful; provide kinesthetic activities.<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss outcomes, make predictions based on obvious facts. |

| <u>Physical Characteristics</u> | <u>Physical Needs</u> |
|--|--|
| <p>We know that three-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Play actively, fatigue easily.<input type="checkbox"/> Alternate feet when climbing stairs.<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot be expected to sit still longer than five minutes.<input type="checkbox"/> Are developing large motor skills.<input type="checkbox"/> Are developing fine motor skills.<input type="checkbox"/> Begin to develop childhood disease. | <p>To satisfy these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Provide variety of short-term play experiences.<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage this as it is important for eye-hand coordination.<input type="checkbox"/> Plan short paced lessons, freedom of movement.<input type="checkbox"/> Allow time for running, throwing, dancing, etc.<input type="checkbox"/> Offer activities that encourage small muscle coordination, painting, using markers and scissors, etc.<input type="checkbox"/> Understand that progress may temporarily be interrupted; skills may regress. |

FOUR-YEAR OLDS

Language Arts

Goal: *To assist the child in mastering expressive and receptive language skills that are necessary for the development of problem-solving and thinking skills.*

Four year olds are learning to:

- follow simple instructions.
- ask and answer questions.
- describe and compare experiences and events.
- describe functions of objects.
- acquire basic knowledge of self and culture.
- respond to questions about similarities and differences of objects.
- develop vocabulary for expressing observations.
- develop vocabulary for thinking and problem solving.

Sensory-Perceptual Skills

Goal: *To assist the child in developing sensory-perceptual skills.*

Four year olds are learning to:

- match, sort, and name a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes.
- sequence objects and pictures by size.
- classify items by one attribute such as color, size, and shape.
- recognize and name a variety of pictured locations.
- classify pictures by categories such as animals, people, and toys.
- duplicate two and three dimensional designs with blocks.
- identify missing parts of pictures and shapes.
- name a sequence of at least three items from memory.
- recognize similarities and differences in a variety of pictures.
- be alert to the presence or absence and/or location of sounds.
- name gross difference in sound characteristics, i.e. loud or soft, fast or slow.
- name a variety of environmental sounds and match these sounds with their associated pictures.
- use imitative and creative expression in the recall of poems and role-play of stories.
- retell the events of a story in sequence.
- follow a series of three directions with motor actions.
- identify pairs of words that rhyme.

FOUR-YEAR OLDS - CONTINUED

Motor Skills

Goal: *To assist the child in developing both gross and fine motor skills.*

Four year olds are learning to:

- move body parts as directed.
- perform balance tasks on floor, walking board, balance beam while going forward, backward, sideways.
- move expressively to music.
- follow a walking pattern.
- throw and catch a ball, beanbag, or balloon.
- reproduce a rhythm pattern, i.e. fast or slow.
- remember and perform two or three actions in order.
- manipulate equipment and be able to place objects appropriately.
- spoon and pour beans, grains, rice, etc.
- cut complex patterns with scissors.
- perform chalkboard movements, i.e. up-down, side-to-side.
- use touch to discriminate various textures, shapes, and sizes.
- perform simple paper-folding tasks.

Interpersonal Skills

Goal: *To assist the child in acquiring interpersonal skills necessary for achieving personal autonomy.*

Many interpersonal objectives deal with affective abilities as well as skills that underlie attitudes and aptitudes related to school learning. A child of this age is learning to:

- care for his/her own physical needs such as dressing, toileting, and eating.
- attend to tasks for increasingly longer periods of time.
- assume independent responsibility for completing tasks.
- indicate his/her willingness to attempt successively more difficult tasks.
- work for delayed rewards.
- respond to social reinforcement such as smiles and / or supportive words rather than concrete rewards.
- critically evaluate his/her own work.
- set realistic goals for himself/herself.
- work independently.

FOUR-YEAR OLDS - CONTINUED

Characteristics of the Young Child

| <u>Emotional Characteristics</u> | <u>Emotional Needs</u> |
|---|--|
| <p>We know that four-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Often exaggerate to expand their sense of self.❑ Are very sensitive to criticism and praise.❑ Develop awareness of concepts of “right” and “wrong.”❑ Are active, often aggressive and can be loud.❑ Want to control their environment; eager to succeed. | <p>To satisfy these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Help child develop positive self-image; accept him/her unconditionally.❑ Respond positively to appropriate behavior; reprimand quietly, don't scold in front of group.❑ Promote positive self-image. Let the child know he/she is loved, things or actions can be bad, and the child is not.❑ Large motor activities should be planned to expend energy.❑ Plan open-ended learning experiences with developmentally appropriate tasks. |

| <u>Social Characteristics</u> | <u>Social Needs</u> |
|--|---|
| <p>We know that four-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Play with peers, but are still egocentric.❑ Play with imaginary friends.❑ Understand the concept of cooperation.❑ Often defy authority.❑ Have strong feelings about home and family life. | <p>To satisfy these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Provide opportunities for group interaction.❑ Recognize need for autonomy and desire to control social situations.❑ Offer projects that require two or more participants.❑ Clearly define limits; provide gentle but consistent discipline; establish routines.❑ Respect the family unit of each child. |

FOUR-YEAR OLDS - CONTINUED

Characteristics of the Young Child - continued

| <u>Cognitive Characteristics</u> | <u>Cognitive Needs</u> |
|--|---|
| <p>We know that four-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Are very verbal. <input type="checkbox"/> Have strong sensory perceptions. <input type="checkbox"/> Have 5-10 minute attention spans, depending on child/activity. <input type="checkbox"/> Are mastering spatial concepts. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop ability to classify and organize information. | <p>To satisfy these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate conversations and listen to the child. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide experiences to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. <input type="checkbox"/> Vary lengths of time of activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop awareness of concepts over, under, around, behind, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer practical opportunities to practice math readiness skills. |

| <u>Physical Characteristics</u> | <u>Physical Needs</u> |
|---|---|
| <p>We know that four-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Take great pleasure in physical activity. <input type="checkbox"/> Move in a more coordinated manner, use both feet and both arms. <input type="checkbox"/> Are increasing eye-hand coordination. <input type="checkbox"/> Are still developing fine motor skills. <input type="checkbox"/> Are continuing to develop childhood diseases. | <p>To satisfy these characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Provide physical activities that encourage the development of gross motor skills. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for dancing, skipping, enable running, jumping, and rhythmic activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide activities for practicing reading readiness skills. <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce manipulatives that require use of small muscles. <input type="checkbox"/> Understand that progress may temporarily be interrupted; skills may regress. |

PERSONAL-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal-social development is the primary goal for the young child. A positive self-concept is essential to successful learning. The more a child understands himself/herself, the better equipped he/she is to relate to other children and adults. Basic social interaction between two children, the teacher and a child and group interaction provide ways in which the child establishes autonomy and learns skills to help him/her relate to his/her world.

Personal development includes: knowing name and age; learning address, phone number, and birthday; caring for toileting needs; washing hands; separating from parent with relative ease; caring for own belongings; and respecting others.

Social development includes: cooperative play, sharing, following directions, initiating conversation and play situations with peers, entering into group activities, developing a positive relationship with teachers, and caring about others.

In relationship to self, the child will be given the opportunity to:

- a. develop a positive self-image.
- b. experience success.
- c. accept self.
- d. accept failures.
- e. exercise self control, self respect, independence.
- f. develop self-confidence.

In relationship to others, the child will be given the opportunity to:

- a. respect rights, property, and feelings of others.
- b. help others.
- c. accept help from others.
- d. interact with adults.
- e. engage in solitary, parallel, cooperative play with others.
- f. share materials.
- g. establish friendships.
- h. participate in group decision-making.
- i. show gratitude.
- j. adjust to change.

The child will begin to develop self-care skills by learning to:

- a. recognize needs and develop appropriate strategies for fulfilling those needs.
- b. assume responsibility for belongings and class materials.