

Creative Curriculum: An Overview

Foundation: Theory

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool is based on developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). DAP is a way to teach children that matches how children develop and learn. This type of instruction provides children with learning activities and opportunities for them to learn and practice new skills at and just above their current level of mastery.

A definitive part of the Creative Curriculum is its focus on establishing a safe, nurturing environment and positive, lasting relationships with families.

Foundation: Research

- Maslow: Basic Needs
Meeting the basic human physiological, safety, belongingness, and esteem ensures the ability to focus on learning.
- Erikson: Stages of Development
Four year olds generally are in the Initiative vs. Guilt stage of development according to Erikson. The curriculum supports development of initiative by allowing students to explore and discover what interests them. Children are offered choices, free to get messy, encouraged to work independently if desired, and given ample opportunities to do so. Students' ideas are valued, and they are encouraged to problem solve with one another and adults, opening the door to lifelong learning!
- Piaget: Logical Thinking and Reasoning
Piaget said that children develop logic and construct understanding by exploring and manipulating objects. The Creative Curriculum supports this developmental need by providing many appropriate opportunities and materials.
- Vygotsky: Social Interaction
In the same way children need interactions with objects to develop; they also need interactions with one another and with adults. He also introduced us to a child's Zone of Proximal development. This is the level at which the child is learning at the moment. The interactions with more knowledgeable peers move the zone up for a student as they rearrange their thought processes and gain knowledge. The

interactions with adults serve as opportunities for the adult to scaffold learning: to take what the child knows already and build upon it in order to move up the zone as well.

- Gardner: Multiple intelligences

Each child has special abilities across a variety of areas. These should all be acknowledged and encouraged. Gardner outlined 8 intelligences: linguistic/verbal, logical/mathematical, musical/rhythmic, spatial/visual, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. It is important to note that no one person is intelligent in all areas and certainly not only in one area.

- Smilansky: Role of/Importance of Play in Learning

There are many types of play that support children's development. Functional play, constructive play, dramatic play, and games with rules are important for developing social relationships, responsibility, problem solving, social norms, fine and gross motor skills, observation skills and planning abilities.

Components

1. How Children Develop & Learn

At the Preschool age, children are developing in so many ways! While we realize that 4 domains are nowhere near the number need to categorize development, 4 are used with specific goals for each.

- Social/Emotional Development: Achieving sense of self, taking responsibility, behaving in a prosocial way
- Physical Development: Achieving gross and fine motor control
- Cognitive Development: Learning and problem solving, thinking logically, representing and thinking symbolically
- Language Development: Listening and speaking, and reading and writing

Individual differences such as gender, temperament, culture and language, interests and learning styles are also considered.

2. The Learning Environment

The physical arrangement is important to consider when creating an environment for learning.

A daily schedule is imperative for establishing security and the sense of order for children.

Creating and maintaining a positive social climate is necessary for establishing a classroom community which supports all areas of development.

Interest Areas

- Blocks
- Dramatic Play
- Toys and Games
- Art
- Library and Computers
- Discovery
- Sand and Water
- Music and Movement
- Outdoors
- Cooking

3. What Children Learn

All content is taught in developmentally appropriate ways, with developmentally appropriate materials, and with respect for the child's interests in each.

- **Literacy:** vocabulary and language, phonological awareness, letters, words, print, comprehension, books, other texts
- **Mathematics:** numbers, patterns and relationships, geometry, spatial awareness, measurement, and data collection, organization, and representation
- **Science:** the physical properties of objects, living things, the earth, and the environment
- **Social Studies:** how people live, work, get along with others, shape, and are shaped by their surroundings
- **The Arts:** dance, music, dramatic play, drawing and painting
- **Technology:** tools and their basic operations and uses
- **Process Skills (apply to all content areas):** observing and exploring; problem solving; and connecting, organizing, communicating, and representing information

4. The Teacher's Role

The teacher is expected to combine their knowledge of child development with content objectives in a way that makes learning effective for their students. Teachers have 3 major roles:

- Observing children

- Guiding children's learning
- Assessing children's learning

These roles constitute a continuous cycle. During the cycle, teachers interact with children and continuously make decisions about when and how to respond in order to meet group and individual needs.

A very important part of the teacher's role is to support the home-school connection. We will make all efforts to:

- Get to know you
- Make you feel welcome
- Keep an open line of communication with you
- Partner with you on your child's learning; and
- Respond to challenging situations