

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

How Young Children Learn

Learning through Play

Child-initiated play lays a foundation for learning and academic success. Through play, children learn to interact with others, develop language skills, recognize and solve problems, and discover their human potential. There is a close link between play and cognitive growth. Play fosters abstract thinking and sets the stage for academic success in reading and writing. Research suggests that social make-believe play is critical to developing cooperation, empathy, impulse control and overall emotional and social health.

A Developmental Approach

We embrace a developmental approach to early childhood education and care. We believe that the key to healthy intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth is to pace the learning so that is consistent with the child's development. Children construct their knowledge through meaningful daily experiences. In a hands-on, play-based program, a child's potential for intellectual development is at its greatest and that the child's love of learning is always central.

Relationships are key

We believe that the key to a quality program lies in relationships. Rich interactions that build trust, respect and social competency is at the heart of all our practices.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

Foundation, Concepts and Skills

DCC Day Care uses *The Creative Curriculum* as a blue print for planning, implementation and assessment of a developmentally appropriate program. Teachers plan curriculum with the underlying goal that children will develop positive attitudes towards school and successful approaches to learning here at DCC. Curriculum activities support our educational philosophy, which advocates a developmental approach and an appreciation for the importance of play in the lives of young children. Children have the opportunity to make real choices, take risks, experiment and engage in activities for sustained periods of time. One will not observe children doing activities such as worksheets, flashcards, skill and drill exercises at our center.

Teachers design curriculum activities with children's developmental needs and unique interests in mind. Teachers observe and assess to discover what is meaningful and motivating to each child. Parents also inform teachers about children's needs, strengths and interest. Teachers incorporate the child's previous experiences, cultural background and family values into decisions regarding curriculum plans.

Early Literacy

- Meaningful conversations and opportunities for rich oral language development
- Reading books together everyday individually, small groups and large groups
- Retelling of stories through repetition, choosing favorite stories, flannel boards, acting out and puppets
- Exposure to a variety of literature and reading experiences including poetry, big books, fiction and non-fiction, listening center and high quality children's literature

- Environment organized with print and labeled with children's names to promote interaction with print
- Appreciation for all stages of emergent writing including scribbling, forming lines and shapes, pretending to write, making mock letters and representational drawings
- Interaction and exposure to alphabet letters through puzzles, alphabet books, ink stampers and stickers, play with letters (magnets, foam or cloth letters)
- Interaction with print through dictations (observing teachers write children's words), meaningful writing in dramatic play and block play, meaningful writing through labeling work, making lists, and documenting discussions and ideas.
- Many opportunities for self-initiated interaction with print through well organized writing center
- Exposure to the functions of books and print such as learning about the title, cover and back of a book, learning to turn the pages one at a time and learning that print carries meaning and moves from left to right.
- Appreciation for authors by letting children make their own books and write their own stories as well as calling attention to authors and illustrators.
- Developing phonemic awareness through rhymes, songs and chants.
- Developing an appreciation for language and word play through songs, nursery rhymes and chants
- Developing a love of literacy through story telling and rich interactions with good books

Early Mathematics

- Opportunities to work with blocks, units and manipulative toys to develop concepts of balance, weight, symmetry and design
- Puzzles and games that allow practice with geometric shapes, sorting, matching, counting, grouping, patterning
- Read books that include counting and shapes
- Opportunity to learn number names
- Puzzles, games and activities that allow practice with measuring length, height or distance
- Opportunity to experiment with concepts of full, empty, more, less, weight through exploration of various messy matter
- Opportunity to learn vocabulary relevant to math such as more, less, big, little, long, short, a few, many, some, etc.
- Opportunity to use charts for graphing meaningful classroom activities
- Opportunities to read and write number symbols in meaningful context.
- Meaningful opportunities to count and practice one to one correspondence through activities such as setting the snack table and taking attendance.
- Opportunities to predict, guess, estimate through meaningful classroom activities
- Meaningful opportunities to measure matter such as through cooking activities and exposure to labels of measurement
- Age appropriate experiences with time concepts such as vocabulary associated with yesterday, today and tomorrow as well as learning about the seasons of the year.
- Using hands and fingers to count and play counting games including songs and rhymes that help reinforce math skills through repetition, rhyme and predictability
- Using materials that help children recognize and name repeating patterns

Science Exploration and Nature Discovery

- A Rich, varied opportunities to use senses throughout the curriculum.
- Interaction with the natural world through activities such as planting seeds, observing insects, collecting and investigating pinecones, nuts, leaves.
- Books with science concepts and nature themes.
- Opportunity to care for the earth and its creatures.
- Opportunity to learn about life cycles such as metamorphosis
- Curriculum that exposes children to key concepts of science such as earth and sky (seasons, weather, light, shadow, moon, stars, sun)
- Experimentation with a variety of materials such as water and sand which gives children opportunities with weight, density, volume, texture and conservation of mater.
- Use of simple tools to observe scientific phenomena (magnifying glass, thermometer, etc)
- Opportunity to predict, observe, collect data, record.
- Opportunity to solve problems - to think, question and reason.
- Experimentation with mixing materials to watch change occur and make something new through science experiments and cooking.

Technology

- Access to real tools such as mixer, blender, drill, to enhance and enrich curriculum and children's understanding of the world.
- Use of technology such as computers (preschool), tape recorders, microscopes and computers as tools to extend learning and enrich the curriculum

Arts (music, dance, drama, movement, visual arts)

- Opportunity to express self freely with age appropriate art materials
- Opportunity to use hands in variety of ways including cutting, gluing, painting, and learning to use and care for tools of art
- Focus on open ended activities and learning through the process of exploration and expression (not product)
- Opportunity to listen to a variety of music and express self through movement
- Opportunity to learn new concepts and vocabulary related to the arts (such as names of instruments or names of different types of music)
- Opportunity to respond to art of other children and adults (such as visits from performing arts department, visits to the art gallery)
- Opportunity to interact with artists in the community

Health and Safety

- Daily practice using good health habits including serving and feeding self, washing hands, brushing teeth, resting and exercising
- Curriculum activities include teaching children about nutrition
- Opportunities to gain awareness and practice safety rules for classroom, home, community
- Opportunity to learn about, ask questions and express fears regarding going to the doctor and dentist, getting shots, taking medicine.

Social Studies

- Curriculum always provides opportunity to foster positive identity and an awareness of self and others
- Classroom community that welcomes each child and fosters each child's experience of belonging to a group
- Opportunity for each child to be a productive member of the group and contribute as they care for their environment and one another as well as engage in collaborative projects with peers
- Opportunities to engage in discussions about friendships, sharing, fairness, responsibility, authority and differences
- Books about the community, friendships, family, culture
- Materials and opportunities to build a child's understanding of culture, family structure, ability, age and gender
- Opportunities to learn about families, and role play during dramatic play
- Opportunities to visit or learn about physical characteristics of the local environment (such as field trips to local farms, orchards, or parks)
- Opportunities to learn about neighborhood through visitors or field trips (such as fieldtrips to mail room, visits from fire-fighters or police officers, visit from doctors and nurses)
- Opportunities to build a foundation for understanding economic concepts (such as participating in bake sale on campus or pretending to play restaurant, store and identifying or exchanging toy money)