



Curriculum Guide

NPS Early Childhood Education and Extended Day Programs

Welcome to the Early Childhood Education and Extended Day Programs! This Curriculum Guide was established for all of our programs which include:

Parent/Child	Full-Day Pre-K
Half-Day Pre-K	Kids' Club
School-Day Pre-K	Club Mid
Pre-K PLUS	

This Curriculum Guide was developed to provide a framework for the structure, activities, and experiences offered in each classroom while still providing flexibility for teachers. Our responsibility is to create a warm, safe, nurturing, challenging, and fun learning environment where children grow and develop. Please review the information included and keep it handy to access as a reference.

Philosophy

The Northville Public Schools Early Childhood and Extended Day curriculum is child-initiated and teacher-framed. Intentionally planned learning opportunities are designed based on the interests and needs of individual children in the class. Our licensed and accredited programs are committed to help each child develop to his/her fullest potential; socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and creatively. Children have opportunities to develop and learn in small group activities, one on one work with an adult and in large group experiences.

We recognize and respect each child's family background, learning style, thought process and unique developmental level. We know that children accomplish their best learning through play and social interaction.

The role of the teacher is to create an atmosphere of respect and autonomy; a climate in which there is a balance of reason, choice, trust, spontaneity, appropriate limits and challenge. Adults view children as competent and full of potential. The teachers' knowledge of individual children, materials and effective teaching approaches help support children's growth to the next levels.

Our Curriculum

Children learn through exploration.	We . . . Encourage free use of materials. Value curiosity and divergent thought. Promote individual creative expression. Investigate children's ideas and extend their thinking through open-ended questions.
Learning and development are inseparable and interdependent processes Children's learning usually proceeds through a predictable, well-researched developmental pattern.	We . . . Know that children construct knowledge through exploration and experimentation . Understand that development requires time. Utilize children's previous knowledge when we plan. Know that children's thought differs from adult logic and connectedness. Assess children through observation so we may plan for the next step.
The social context is the stage for learning. Autonomy is the key outcome.	We . . . Allow children to learn through observation and interaction. Know that children learn from their environments, from other children, and from adults. Support collaborative and diverse group interactions . View every play experience as a learning opportunity. Teach and model pro-social behaviors and strategies. Use encouragement to promote intrinsic motivation . Value caring acts of social competence and kindness . Continually evaluate and reflect upon the successful implementation of strategies.
An inquiry, problem-solving Approach to curriculum is encouraged.	We . . . Ask open-ended questions to support divergent thinking . Accept that conflict is a part of life and a provocation for learning. Know that challenge and new experiences are a part of development. Develop, with children, classroom guidelines/rules. Question "Why not?"
Well-designed play environments provide the challenge and motivation for children to extend their thinking into more sophisticated realms .	We . . . Recognize and plan for various levels of play development. Strive to know individual children through continuous observation of their interactions. Engage children in the classroom by sharing and participating in the joy of play. Provide flexible play environments. Provide a variety of ways for children to express their learning. Allow adequate time for reflection and processing of thought . Value outdoor play as an extension of the classroom. Engage in large motor play, scientific observations & experimentation , artistic expression, appreciation of nature, & sensory activities, indoors and outdoors.
Classroom communities are developed by establishing procedures and expectations.	We . . . Recognize that children are individuals with rights. Know that the democratic process is based upon mutual respect between children, families and staff. Develop classroom guidelines with children, considering and valuing all contributions . Employ logical and natural consequences in response to inappropriate choices. Acknowledge that rules apply to everyone in the classroom. Actively investigate all points of view. Reach consensus or agree to disagree by following a problem-solving procedure.
Connections within and across the curriculum are vital applications of learning.	We . . . Value that children's learning be relevant and useful in their present lives. Provide an environment in which children are safe to explore various choices. Plan long-term projects with children to gain knowledge of their theories, implementation and reflection skills . Know that project work requires collaboration between teachers and children. Plan provocations for children based on observations to extend their learning.
We work in partnership with families to support the optimum growth of each child.	We . . . Maintain an open-door policy. Value forms of family contributions . Plan special activities to involve families in the classroom. Communicate with families regularly about their child's growth and development and formally assess children twice per year.

Classroom Environment

The Role of the Environment

Teachers are encouraged to step back and critically examine the classroom space to determine whether the environment is personally reflective of the children, parents, and teachers. Through thoughtful use of space, color, natural light, displays of children's work, and attention to detail, the environment serves as the third teacher. We refrain from using commercially produced materials such as borders, posters, alphabets, numbers, shapes, colors, etc. Instead, displays feature work in which children and teachers have selected the media or subject and always reflect the interest and learning taking place in the classroom. The environment invites engagement, wonder, imagination and learning. Our goal is to convey to children, parents, teachers and community how the space is to be used and that their presence is valued and respected. The environment sets the stage for interactions among children.

Our classroom environments are:

- Organized and free of clutter.
- Set up with well defined centers.
- Intentionally planned to provide free access of materials for children.
- Home-like, with lamps, plants, baskets, and soft elements.
- Filled with a wide variety of interesting, open-ended, natural materials (loose parts) for children to explore and move from area to area.
- Organized with documentation that accompanies children's work posted in common areas and hallways to provide a context for families, visitors and colleagues.
- Reflective of children's interest.

Classroom Displays and Postings

Items displayed and posted in the classroom are relevant and current. Children's work is thoughtfully displayed with accompanying documentation. Pictures and posters reflect the diversity of the class as well as diversity in the world.

Each classroom has a Parent Board or area which includes the following:

- A copy of the License/Certificate of Accreditation/Licensing Book (Orange), Licensing Notebook and Product Recalls
- The Parent Handbook
- The program brochure
- Current menus
- Curriculum plans or Daily Reflection & Planning Sheets
- School Improvement Goals
- Statement regarding Criminal Background checks for staff and volunteers
- The flexible daily schedule
- Other communication from the office as needed

Emergency Information is typically posted near the phone and includes the following:

- Fire evacuation plans
- Map of evacuation route
- Inclement weather procedures
- Medical emergency procedures
- Safety Alert Procedures

Learning Centers/Areas

Learning Centers are well-defined spaces in the classroom. Materials are carefully selected and designed to be flexible and open ended. Through keen observation and conversations with children throughout the school year, learning centers are adapted to reflect the children's interests and encourage their curiosity and sense of wonder. A variety of materials can be a provocation for deeper understanding.

Writing Center

This center supports children's emerging interest in literacy. Licensing rules require that a minimum of 30 minutes of developmentally appropriate emergent literacy activities be provided each day. This needs to be documented on Planning Sheets. A variety of paper, writing tools, clipboards, notebooks, journals, envelopes, tape, post-it notes, etc. are always available and accessible. Simple sight words and phrases including pictures, are available, to support children's emerging writing. A message center (for children to write and leave messages for each other) is available in this area and serves as an effective way to encourage writing. Some examples include children's sign in and out sheets, journals, etc.

Art Center

A variety of media that promotes creative, open ended opportunities for children to experiment and express themselves are available to children. Materials are age appropriate, authentic and natural, and children's interests are embraced and expanded upon. Teachers partner with children to create an organized and purposeful art area which invites interactions with the materials and expands children's thinking. The use of recycled materials is encouraged as a way to support children's creative expression.

We stress the importance of the process as the focus of a child's work, not the product. We ask children to tell us about their work and record their words in a way that is respectful. Children are encouraged to write their own name on their work. Adults write on children's work only with their permission.

Adult made models are not utilized and art projects using food are discouraged. Staff are expected to support children's creative expression through art and limit directing children's work.

Dramatic Play

Engagement in this learning center supports children's investigations and deepens their understanding of their world. Items in this area include real materials like boxes and cans of food, dress up clothes, fabric and scarves and multicultural items. The materials selected are adaptable as children create different identities for the dramatic play area. School-age children are also investigating their world and experiment with "real world" experiences like restaurants, travel agencies, offices and photo shops. Materials for older children include items like menus and order pads, travel brochures, cash registers, cameras, phones, and computer boards.

Book/Quiet Area(s)

This is a quiet, well-defined area where children can relax, read and research topics of interest. Books may be displayed on a shelving unit or in baskets and the area conveys the message that books are important. Furnishings include soft elements, lamps, plants, area rugs and baskets. A selection of age appropriate interesting books, as well as authentic research material, is available and rotated. Books may also be available in baskets in other areas of the classroom.

We value providing independent, quiet spaces within the classroom for children to read, reflect or simply relax.

Construction Area

We provide a variety of age appropriate building materials like Lego blocks, wooden unit blocks and accessories, Kapla blocks and natural materials like stones, tiles, tubes, wood. Also provided are items like clipboards, pencils and post-it notes for design and books for reference.

Science, Math, Sensory

Children are provided with opportunities to count, sort, sequence, problem solve and categorize utilizing games, manipulative toys, puzzles, and natural materials such as stones and seashells. Tools like mirrors, microscopes, magnifying glasses, measuring tools and binoculars should be accessible so children can further their investigation of the world. Cooking projects provide fun along with valuable learning opportunities. In Pre-K programs, tactile opportunities like clay, playdoh, shaving cream, water and sand are offered daily. These activities help support children's sensory integration.

Motor Development

Opportunities are provided to use and develop both small and large muscles. Children naturally develop gross, fine, and visual motor skills early on in life, if they are exposed to a variety of experiences. Materials like beads, wire, buttons, clay, scissors, tongs, hole punches and string should be available to enhance fine motor skills. Opportunities for children to run, jump, skip, hop, roll and dance and move support gross motor development.

Fine Motor:

Fine Motor development activities are offered daily. In addition, fine motor activity ideas are shared with families as a way to bridge the home to school connection.

Large Motor:

Both independent and group activities that help develop children's large muscles are supported and encouraged. Time is provided for active play such as running, jumping, marching, climbing and balancing. Music is incorporated with many large motor/movement activities. Pre-K programs include a variety of music and movement activities daily. These activities may be included in group time, during transitions, in small groups or center times. The "Pre-K Motor Program" is provided weekly from the beginning of October through the end of May. Additional games, activities and obstacle courses that support large motor development are introduced throughout the year.

The Daily Schedule

Gathering Time

Group Gathering times are typically facilitated by the Head Teacher or Lead Assistant. During this time, all children are encouraged to join in and participate in group discussions and other group activities. Staff acknowledge and accept that children's methods of participation may vary. Children are never pressured to share or verbalize their thoughts. Children shall be encouraged to sit comfortably as they attend (avoid "criss-cross applesauce" or "like a pretzel"). The duration of group should be developmentally appropriate and consider children's engagement in the activity.

Group Gathering time is an opportunity for teachers to focus on planning and reflection with children. They may discuss what happened the previous day and plan for the current day together. Additional activities in Pre-K programs can include opportunities for sharing, movement to music, games, finger plays, Brain Gym®, singing, counting, calendar, weather, and story telling.

In Kids' Club, the primary goal of group is to take attendance in order to account for all the children that are expected. For this reason, group is done as soon as possible after school dismisses so that any missing children can be located. Group discussions include community building activities, issues and problem solving, and making group decisions democratically. Group games may also be played during this time.

Story Time/Literacy Building Opportunities

Literacy may be linked with the gathering time or may be a separate time altogether. Activities may include reading, writing or dictating stories, poems, chapter books, story boards, using puppets, flannel boards and drama. Developmentally appropriate language and literacy experiences are offered at varied times throughout the day and for no less than a total of thirty minutes.

Transitions

Children are approached individually or in small groups and told that clean up time is approaching. We have found that a signal such as the sound of a musical instrument (chimes, drum, etc.) or a song may be helpful when it is time to clean up. Transition activities are planned and purposeful.

Clean Up

Ample time is provided for clean-up within the daily schedule and the environment is designed to support children's involvement. Materials and shelves are labeled and pictures of materials are used to support children's participation and independence with clean-up. Staff is expected to assist children as they participate during clean-up time to support the development of children's self-help skills, independence and responsibility. Staff work along-side children to provide a positive role model. This also helps to develop a sense of community in the classroom by working together and showing respect for the environment. Cleaning materials and tools like small brooms, dust pans, etc. are available for children to use.

Snack/Meals

Snack/meal times provide the opportunity for social interaction and fostering independence. Children assist with set-up and clean-up and are encouraged to do as much for themselves as possible with adult guidance and support. Children assist with setting the table, opening their own milk, unwrapping and inserting their own straw, pouring milk, etc.

In Full-Day Pre-K, breakfast is served **no later** than 9:15 a.m.

In Full-Day Pre-K programs, lunch can be purchased through Food Service or brought from home.

In School-Day Pre-K and Pre-K PLUS, snack and lunch are brought from home.

In Pre-K programs, snack is brought from home and offered during center time or may be offered at one time for all the children. In Kids' Club and Club Mid, snack is typically served as a group.

Small Group Opportunities

A variety of methods are used for grouping children for small group work. Opportunities are provided for children to work on individual goals, follow directions, test theories, expand on ideas and collaborate and cooperate during play and project work. Space and time are provided for small groups of children to work both independently and collaboratively on activities prepared in advance by the Head Teacher. Small groups are supported by an adult through journaling, photo opportunities, documentation and reflection.

Studio/Curriculum Support

The Studio is a space where children are encouraged to be creative and explore a variety of materials. Typically, small groups of 4 year-old children who are in their last year of preschool, are invited on a weekly basis to join the Studio teacher to problem solve, experience different media, and build knowledge together. The concept of the Studio is also incorporated into the classroom environment.

The Studio teacher's role is to support and extend classroom experiences. Children benefit from a connection between the Studio and classroom supported by a collaborative relationship among the teachers. This collaboration includes active participation during group gatherings as well as reflection and planning together. This process empowers children to be actively involved in the learning community. Studio teachers are available to support all teachers with projects and curriculum. Studio teachers extend children's experiences by collaborating with local artists, musicians and organizations. Each year they coordinate to bring visitors in to share their talents

Outdoor Time

The outdoor environment is an extension of the classroom. It provides children the freedom to interact with each other and nature. Outdoor play is important and available daily, provided it is not raining, there is no tornado watch and the actual temperature is above twenty (20) degrees and wind chill is above ten (10) degrees (preschool age children). Kids' Club programs follow the temperature guidelines in the elementary building.

The duration of outside play is determined by evaluating the conditions. Our staff make sure children are properly dressed and prepared to go outside.

To support outdoor play, interesting and useful materials are provided to children including scarves, streamers, clipboards, balls, bikes/trikes, wagons, pails and shovels.

Teachers work with children to develop systems that allow children to assist with cleaning up outdoor equipment in order to reinforce respect for the environment.

Rest Time

Children that are under school age and in our care for 5 or more continuous hours must be provided with an opportunity to rest. Staff assist in helping children transition to rest time. In Full-Day Pre-K classrooms rest time is no more than two hours in duration. Children are offered books at the beginning of rest time. Children not sleeping after about 45 minutes are offered an alternative activity such as slate boards with chalk, markers, etc. Children may engage in these materials on their cots/ rest mats, at tables in the classroom, or other areas of the building if appropriate supervision is available.

School-Day Pre-K children take a brief “rest and read” time each day which lasts no longer than 30 minutes.

Technology/Media

We use technology/media in our classrooms to support children’s learning. Technology is increasingly a part of our society and relevant in our classrooms when used appropriately. Classroom staff have access to several different types of technology including computers and tablets. These tools can provide children with opportunities to research, investigate, work collaboratively and expand their thinking. Adaptive technology may also be utilized as a supportive tool for children with special needs. In addition there are a variety of tools designed to support the use of children’s home language while learning their new language. (link to NAEYC Position Statement on Technology)

Definitions:

“Media” means use of electronic devices with a screen, including but not limited to, televisions, computers, tablets, multi-touch screens, interactive white boards, mobile devices, cameras, movie players, e-book readers, and electronic game consoles.

“Interactive media” means media designed to facilitate active and creative use by children and to encourage social engagement with other children and adults.

“Non-interactive media” means media which are used passively by children.

Guidelines for Use:

Use of media is prohibited for children under 2 years of age.

Use of media for children 2 years of age and older is limited to 2 hours per week/per child. School-Age children may exceed this limit only when working on homework or other educational activities.

In Pre-K classes the focus is on “interactive media” and typically involves researching/investigating topics of interest (including the weather) and looking at images. The expectation is that technology will be used as a learning tool with close support from a teacher. Children should also have access to things like computer keyboards, cameras, microscopes, gears, wheels and levers.

Interactive White Boards are not typically available in Pre-K classrooms. If an Interactive White

Board is available, teachers are expected to follow the expectations set forth by the Great Start Readiness Program. A copy is available in the EC Office.

Kids' Club and Club Mid programs typically have access to the computer lab and/or computers in their classroom which can be used as an activity choice. Staff are expected to closely monitor the use to assure guidelines are in place and websites being visited are appropriate. Teachers are expected to track children's media use (screen time) to assure they don't exceed the 2 hour/week limit (not including homework or educational use).

Homework

In Kids' Club programs children are provided with a time and indoor space to work on homework each afternoon. The homework area is supervised by a staff person who can offer assistance if needed. Kids' Club staff partner with families to define and support the needs of individual children.

Club Mid offers a daily dedicated homework time. Students not engaged in homework can engage in quiet activities in the classroom.

Brain Gym®

This is an educational, movement based program which is designed to provide activities which help integrate the brain, senses and body so that optimal learning may occur. Brain Gym® activities help in the following areas:

- memory, concentration and focus
- physical coordination and balance
- communication skills and language development
- academic skills

Teachers have found that incorporating Brain Gym® activities into their daily schedules, usually during transition to group meeting, is beneficial and has been shown to be an effective behavior management strategy. Training is provided to staff so that the elements of Brain Gym® will be incorporated into each classroom to support children's learning.

Additional Classroom Elements

Reggio Influence

Our curriculum embraces the best practices found in early childhood from the image of the child as competent and full of potential and is based on research and best practices

In the schools of Reggio Emilia, a region in northern Italy, this approach begins with a genuine and deep respect for children, their families and their culture. This philosophy has impacted Early Childhood programs in our country as there are many advantages to the Reggio Approach. For children, this approach:

- Is based on children's abilities and skills.
- Models learning by doing.
- Allows children the opportunity to work in a group and respects each person's point of view while provoking thought and supporting socialization and collaboration.
- Bases learning, both formal and play-based, on children's true interests.
- Nurtures and encourages curiosity in children.
- Supports learning through observation and listening.
- Records the learning process through documentation.
- Exposes children to many materials (clay, wire, paper, paint, shadows, etc.) that offer children tools with which to express themselves.
- Teaches children to become better communicators.
- Develops children's mastery by building competencies.
- Uses displays for children to see their abstract ideas become more concrete as they are encouraged to express themselves through use of materials.

Reggio Influence:

- Uses a collaborative approach with staff, administration and families.
- Emphasizes listening to and observing children to extend learning.
- Uses the environment to provoke learning.
- Displays high-quality work by the children so visitors and parents are then able to learn more about the children's capabilities and potential. This work also promotes the program.
- Recognizes children as unique and valuable.

- *Chicago Commons Child Development Center*

Newsletters

The classroom newsletter is a valuable tool for communicating and partnering with families. Newsletters go out monthly. The purpose of sending a newsletter home to families on a consistent basis is to keep parents informed and to share children's learning experiences.

The following information is typically included in all newsletters:

- Reflections of the experiences occurring in the classroom
- The link to learning and school readiness/enrichment
- Pertinent program information like school closings and required deadlines for enrollment along with Extra Care

In addition, newsletters may contain:

- Children's reflections
- Pertinent articles that relate to classroom experiences
- Other relevant information
- Pictures of the children

Newsletters are typically emailed to families and put on the EC website. Pictures of the children's faces and children's names do not go on the web.

Emergent Curriculum Plans

Teaching teams reflect on common elements being pursued by children and brainstorm future activities and explorations that support and expand on children's interests and goals. Planning and reflection sheets are used as a tool for documentation of experiences to be explored and theories

to be investigated. Careful observation of children is an important element in the planning process. In addition, teaching teams will utilize:

- The children's Family Information Form
- The children's previous knowledge
- Their observations and notes/Journaling
- The Key Principles from Reggio Emilia

Teachers make the connections from the classroom activities to the learning outcomes and the developmental skills that are occurring. This is articulated both in conversations with parents and also in a more formal way via the classroom newsletter.

Teachers meet monthly in collegial teams and classroom teams to set goals and plan.

Holidays and Celebrations

Our curriculum is not holiday driven. This means that impending holidays are not the basis of plans in the classroom or used as a starting point for decorating the environment. Celebrations are often connected with holidays. Teachers give careful consideration to plans for celebrations.

They are planned by the teacher, based on conversations with children and observations of children. Parents are a valuable resource, and all ideas are heard and negotiated.

The goal is to offer children consistency and experiences that allow them to be engaged in the process. Providing authentic learning opportunities focused on the seasons, what's happening in the community and what's relevant to children is important. Along with daily classroom activities, holiday celebrations are just one way for children, teachers and families to work together to create developmentally and culturally appropriate learning opportunities.

Celebrations will typically:

- Focus on meaningful activities and offer authentic learning experiences for children.
- Respect children's need for consistency and routine in their day.
- Respect diversity.
- Connect with the interests of children.
- Be relevant to children's daily life at school.
- Honor every group - children, families and staff.
- Be inclusive.
- Focus on celebrating traditions.
- Respect that family holiday celebrations are unique and different in each family.

Celebrations will not typically:

- Be centered around foods that are high in fat and sugar.
- Promote stereotypes or inaccurate history.
- Be a complete deviation from a typical day.
- Be scary or uncomfortable for some children.
- Be canned or "touristy".
- Over stimulate children.
- Exclude any children.
- Assume what the interests of children are.

- Encourage children to be consumers. (Focusing on buying things and supporting the competition between who has the most and the best.)

Some examples of past celebrations include:

- Listening to and writing children’s stories and plans for their celebrations with their families. Then creating a book or documentation panel out of these individual stories.
- Creating a Celebration book.
- Inviting children to bring in a picture or artifact of a family celebration for discussion with the class.
- Providing a variety of new and recycled seasonal stationary in the writing center. For example, we may ask parents to donate Valentines for the writing center instead of having children fill them out at home and bring them in to pass out.
- Sensory activities - like gutting a pumpkin or filling the sand/water table with leaves or snow.
- Baking and cooking with children. Bread, rice and pasta/dumplings are common to all cultures and can support awareness of diversity.
- Making cards or wrapping paper which can be used for the variety of gifts and celebrations.
- Singing songs with fingerplays. Reading stories.
- Creating a holiday with the children. Planning activities and a “celebration” for the invented holiday.
- Asking families to donate a book on their child’s birthday. Inviting parents in to read the book with the class and put the child’s picture on the inside cover.

Some activities you won’t see in our program include:

- Holiday stencil shapes.
- Paper and/or paint colors specific at holiday times (for example, only using orange and black paper at Halloween).
- Situations where children sit, wait and watch as an adult does the work.
- Plans without input from children.
- Holiday pre-cut shapes.

We ask ourselves....

Why is it important to teach this holiday?

Am I supporting the uniqueness and diversity of each family?

Are the activities meaningful?

Are the activities a good use of children’s time?

Am I supporting best practice and developmentally appropriate practice?

Does the classroom environment and curriculum reflect the diversity in the world around us?

Do the plans respect family’s economic diversity? Or do they create financial stress for families?

Assessment

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)

To assure that children’s learning and development are on track and that areas where additional support may be needed are supported, we ask all parents to participate in the ASQ on line developmental screening within the first 90 days of enrollment. Resources, extra activities and services can be made available to families through the Great Start Collaborative – Wayne “Help Me Grow” project website: <https://asqonline.com/family/30f968>. Children’s results/information are kept confidential.

Portfolios:

Information is gathered in the context of everyday classroom activities to obtain a representative picture of each child’s abilities and progress. We track children’s progress for a variety of reasons:

- to be assured that learning and development are taking place,
- to make children's progress visible to parents and
- to make adjustments in our teaching strategies.

Pre-K Teachers maintain a portfolio for each child. Portfolios are a collection of children's experiences, from the very beginning of the school year through the end, that converge the knowledge being built during the child's time spent at school. The purpose of the portfolio is to track children's growth and development throughout the school year. The key is to observe purposefully and document examples of rich data. The portfolio may include, but is not limited to:

- drawing samples
- writing samples
- evidence of cutting and other fine motor experiences
- photographs of large motor experiences
- documentation of children's use of language (a story or theory dictated to a teacher)

Individual Goals:

Purposeful observation at the beginning of the school year leads teachers to understand each child's strengths and challenges. These observations along with discussions with parents will guide individual goals. Individual goals for children are established with families in the fall and guide the curriculum planning. Plans are adapted in response to the interests, strengths and needs expressed by the children. Portfolios are shared with families throughout the year, when requested, and during conferences. They are distributed at the end of the school year. Individual goals for children are written and reviewed regularly. As children develop, goals are amended.

Parent/Teacher Conferences:

Conferences are offered twice per year for all Pre-K families. Conferences provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to come together to discuss children's progress, accomplishments and experiences at home and school. Teachers are available to schedule a time to conference with families both formally and informally as needed. As part of the conference experience, families are offered opportunities to observe in the classroom.

Anecdotal Notes:

Anecdotal notes are written observations that are specific to an individual child's approach to an activity or interaction, as well as their skills and behavior as they relate to early childhood development. Anecdotal notes are typically brief, objective and focused on a specific outcome. Notes are most accurate when they are taken immediately following an activity.

The purpose of anecdotal notes is to capture observations, provide ongoing documentation, specific to a particular child, over time and provide information that will assist in individualizing the curriculum to move each child forward in their early learning and development. (Copyright 2003, Alberta Education) Each classroom team should establish a system for the collection of ongoing anecdotal notes.

Classroom Observations:

Teachers invite and encourage parents to visit the classroom for a more formal observation in the fall and spring. We provide a format for parents to communicate their feedback and ask questions. The fall observation provides parents with an opportunity for input on their child's individual goals.

The classroom observation provides parents with the opportunity to observe their child and the dynamics of the classroom "in action." Observations are scheduled and parents may observe from a distance or become actively involved.

Documentation:

This is the process of gathering evidence of children's learning. Documentation is done through observation, photos, video tape, work samples, conversations and reflections. It is an ongoing process that involves the teachers in analyzing, discussing and interpreting their observations. The following key areas are related to documentation:

- Reflections: Sharing children's perspectives
- Assessment: Capturing competence
- Children's Work: Collecting samples
- Observation: Watching, listening and recording
- Narratives: Telling stories

We document to share the value of active learning experiences, to determine the effectiveness of teaching strategies and to support the diverse ways children learn. Documentation also involves families in their children's education, assesses children's progress and encourages teacher self-reflection and professional growth.

Children's work that is on display is accompanied by relevant documentation.

Project Work/Studies/Emergent Curriculum

Projects and studies provide the foundation for the children's and teacher's daily learning experiences. They may be short or long term in duration depending on the interest level and time spent investigating. The value in project work is in recognizing the importance of children's investigations and knowledge that is built during the process.

Projects and studies may originate from:

- common experiences
- determining children's interests through listening and observing
- child-initiated topics, teacher-initiated topics

Projects are likely to be successful if they are:

- more concrete than abstract
- direct experiences with real objects
- easily related to prior experiences
- topics that enable children to do research with minimal adult assistance
- consistent with children's skills and techniques
- culturally relevant to children and their families

A "Study" Outline and Documentation Guide are available to support project work throughout the year.

Family Involvement

Family members are welcome visitors in our programs at all times. We recognize that parents are their children's first and best teachers. Activities to allow families to network at the beginning of the school year are valued and encouraged (i.e. Open House, potlucks, picnics, ice cream socials). Equally important and often more valuable are opportunities that support children's work and learning in the classroom (i.e. exploration of materials, discussions of project work).

Each class provides opportunities throughout the year to bring families together. When planning these activities we take into consideration the needs and schedules of our busy families, as well as their cultures, family backgrounds and home language.

Field Trips

Full-Day Pre-K, School-Day Pre-K, Half-Day Pre-K, Pre-K PLUS and Parent/Child:

In keeping with our emergent curriculum philosophy, field trips are aligned with the interest areas occurring in the classroom. They are planned with the involvement of families as the interests emerge during topics of study. Consideration is given to maintaining class times and schedules as well as the additional cost to families. There may be one or two “traditional” preplanned trips. Transportation for all Pre-K field trips is provided by parents. Northville Public Schools will not provide buses. Parents are required to drive their own child and take all necessary safety precautions.

Kids’ Club:

Field trips are arranged during extra care weeks and for the summer programs. Parent input is always welcome.

Behavior Guidance

Our goal of guiding children’s behavior is to help children learn self-discipline and self-control. The goal for staff is to encourage children to respect themselves, other people and the environment. We view mistakes that children make as opportunities for learning and use logical consequences.

Positive guidance techniques are used to help children develop self-control and accept responsibility for their actions. Teachers establish environments where all children have access to ongoing positive relationships and success. Our goal is to help children develop to their fullest potential; confident in themselves and their ability to learn, willing to try new ideas, and respect for the rights of others.

When developing a classroom management plan, the following concepts are considered:

- Expectations are specific, taught and modeled.
- Specific, positive feedback is included in all plans.
- Consequences are logical and related to the behavior whenever possible to increase the probability of learning.
- We separate the “deed” from the “doer” in order to maintain self-esteem. Make sure the child understands it is what he/she is doing that you do not like, not that you do not like them.
- Communicate feelings using an “I” statement (i.e.; Suzy, I feel ____ when you throw things in class because it might hurt someone.) Avoid judgmental statements.

Procedure for Discipline Concerns:

1. Talk with the child.
2. Discuss the situation with classroom staff team.
3. Contact the parent.
4. Contact the Assistant Program Coordinator or the Program Coordinator.
5. Set up a formal conference.

Diversity

Staff respect and build on the strengths of the diverse cultures represented in our program. Family participation and involvement is encouraged to help build a sense of community and belonging.

Careful consideration is given when selecting equipment and materials. We seek to provide baskets, fabrics, books, dolls, craft pieces, music and images that are representative of the various cultures in the classroom as well as the larger community.

The Family Information Form is reviewed and utilized to further staff understanding of each child and family.

English Language Learners

We strive to provide a classroom setting that is based on a holistic, individual-focused approach and founded in developmentally appropriate practice.

While developing a new language acquisition, children need:

- routine
- quiet space to observe and work independently
- lots of repetition and reciting
- lots of nonverbal communication
- picture schedules

Teachers are encouraged to partner with parents, learn simple phrases and words in the child's language, and seek support as needed from our District ELL Department.

Motor Skills Program

All Early Childhood classrooms provide the Pre-K Motor Program. The program begins in early October each year and runs through the end of May. Start-up training is provided to parents and staff at the beginning of the school year. Head Teachers attend all motor development training with parents, and assist in coordinating the parent volunteer schedule. Parent volunteers implementing the Motor Skills program must complete all the necessary clearances. (ICHAT, DHS screening, etc.)

Pre-K to Kindergarten Transition

Starting Kindergarten is an important milestone for families and often along with the excitement, children can also feel worried and a little apprehensive. To ease the transition for children and families, our Early Childhood staff help children prepare in a wide variety of ways.

Within the Context of the Pre-K classroom ~

Teaching staff talk with children about their feelings regarding going to Kindergarten. This often naturally follows the Kindergarten Round-up experience in April or May.

Many play-based opportunities are provided for children as an avenue for them to express their fears, concerns or excitement. Familiar activities to help release tension are made available like play dough, water play, hammering at the work bench, playing outside and movement to music activities.

Books are added to the classroom library in which characters adjust to new circumstances and situations. Stories serve as conversation starters about what it will be like to move on to Kindergarten.

Puppets and other props are added to the dramatic play area so that children can act out going to Kindergarten to help process their feelings.

At the writing center, children are encouraged to draw and write about going to Kindergarten. A class project might include writing and illustrating a class book about both the children's and teachers' feelings about moving on to Kindergarten.

Within small group times, children are encouraged to reflect on their positive memories of preschool and all that they have learned. They can look through their portfolio or other classroom books and photos. Emphasis is focused on how much they have grown and all the skills they have developed.

Large group activities may include making a list of children's ideas about what Kindergarten will be like and then talking about what will be the same and what will be different.

Invitations are often extended to Kindergarten teachers to visit the preschool classroom to explain what happens in Kindergarten.

An elementary student may also be invited to visit the class to talk about Kindergarten.

Preschool classrooms that are located within the elementary school may visit a Kindergarten classroom.

For Individual Children ~

Preschool teachers talk with elementary school staff if they have concerns about the child's transition to Kindergarten. Often times the coordinator and/or social worker will visit the child in the preschool class to learn more about their personality and learning style which assists in their Kindergarten placement.

For our Pre-K Families ~

Families are reminded of Kindergarten Round up dates and times and provided with a general idea of what to expect.

During spring conferences, teachers review children's portfolios and encourage families to share them with the Kindergarten teacher in the fall.

Early Childhood teachers help families understand what Kindergarten readiness really means and provide resources for activities that parents can do over the summer months to support children's continued learning.

Additional suggestions are provided to families, as needed, to individually support children with the transition. For example; talking with children in advance about what to expect and reassuring children as often as necessary, establishing a routine every morning, providing warnings of a parent's departures, etc.

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