

The Salem State College Preschool Program

Curriculum Guidebook



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Our approach to curriculum is based on the **Reggio Approach** principles. We have been exploring this approach for several years and have implemented many aspects here at the Preschool. We have a growing collection of books, videos and articles on the Reggio philosophy which parents are welcome to use. **“Bringing Reggio Home”** will give some highlights of ways the principles are incorporated at the SSC Preschool.

Our curriculum is arranged using the **choice board** and **project work**. Both of these methods guide the curriculum process. The curriculum areas include math, science, language arts, social studies, studio arts, and music, gross and fine motor development, health and safety and character development.

The Choice Board

The Lead Teacher carefully arranges the classrooms. The materials are selected for each of the **10 choice board areas**. The Preschool maintains a wide variety of high quality, open -ended materials, which promote critical thinking and creative skills. They include:

- *Project Work area (see details below)
- Art corner
- Easel painting
- Science/Math
- Small desk –may include Light Table, manipulatives
- Sand/water play
- Library
- Rug room- puzzles, games, etc
- Taped off area- may include puppet theatre, floor puzzles, creative play materials
- Playhouse Room- blocks and dramatic play area

Several activities are carefully chosen and posted for the children to independently select the activity they want to participate in. The child (signs-up) places his/her choice name card below the activity card to identify his/her selection. There are many choices to choose from and children can move through them according to their own interest. Children are encouraged to focus on an area and complete the puzzle or game before moving on. They can also return to the area at another time. The choice board goals are to give each child the opportunity to select activities independently, guide their social interaction development, and to allow the teaching staff to gather information and insight on skills, interests and group dynamics.

Project Work

“A project is an in-dept investigation of a topic worth learning more about. The investigation is usually undertaken by a small group of children, sometimes by a whole class, and occasionally by an individual child. The key feature of a project is that it is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions about a topic posed by the children, teachers or parents.”(Lilian Katz) The length of the project may vary from a couple of weeks to several months.

Project work is only one aspect of the curriculum. There are many learning areas and activities where children are actively engaged. They include singing time, block building,

dramatic play, group story time, snack time, outdoor play to name a few. “ The extended time and in-dept nature of projects enables rich **documentation** of children’s growth and development of skills.”(Katz) Documentation panels are developed which tells the story of the evolving project. With teacher narratives, photographs, conversations, and sample drawings the history of the project comes alive. Children, teachers, parents and visitors can see first hand what the children are learning and how the investigation is proceeding.

The Creative Process

Children may work on drawings and paintings over many days and sometimes weeks. We focus on the process. Studio arts are a vital and vibrant part of our program. As children draw, paint, sculpt, and work with clay and wire, they begin to represent ideas and their understanding of the world. Each child has a portfolio which is kept in the classroom. Children are encouraged to re-visit their work, make additions and corrections to their drawings/paintings. To that end, children’s work remains at school and may not be sent home every day. We ask for your support and understanding of this concept so children do not feel pressured to produce a piece of artwork. Our approach is not “a make and take home” practice. **We work at slowing children down, helping them see details and how things change over time.** In the process, children think creatively, make decisions and problem solve. Please join us in our adventure with your children this year and hope you are able to release your creative spirit here too!

During our first month in September we will focus of getting to know one another. The All About Me Books, our school photo friends, and the message board will provide many projects and activities for us to explore.

*** Guidelines for Preschool Based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks**

At the SSC Preschool experiences are presented in a developmental sequence and place learning in the context of play and meaningful activities. The mark of a superior teacher is the ability to select materials and interact with children in ways that motivate children to learn through their own play. The art of teaching is founded in a thorough understanding of child development, coupled with careful observation and documentation of child’s responses to materials and interactions.

Experiences are that:

- Young children learn by doing, and need to be provided with many and varied opportunities to explore and experiment with concepts through play and hands-on activities in the natural environment.
- Although children develop through a generally predictable sequence of steps and milestones, they many not proceed through these steps in the same way or at the same time. The younger the child, the greater the need for first-hand, sensory experiences.
- Through play experiences, preschool children constantly refine their skill development and understanding. As teachers observe children’s play and development, they can identify the signals for providing new stimulation and challenges.
- Activities, environment, materials may need to be adapted to meet children’s individual needs, including modifications for children with disabilities.

Strategies for fostering learning in all curriculum areas include many and varied opportunities for children to:

Plan Play Reflect Revisit Connect

▪ Plan: children consider what they are going to do with the materials and how they are going to do it, to build a foundation for setting goals for themselves

▪ Play: children use materials and make choices in ways that best suit their own personal curiosity and understanding and experience joy in creating meaning for themselves

▪ Reflect: children re-call/reflect on things that happened during their experiences, thereby reinforcing or questioning their understandings

▪ Revisit: children practice skills and replay experiences over and over in many different ways, and either confirm their understanding or adapt it based on new discoveries. As they explore, their understanding spirals, each experience building on previous learning

▪ Connect: children, with the guidance of highly trained teachers, create linkages among disciplines and areas of skill development.

*Taken from the Massachusetts Preschool Curriculum Frameworks

Charting a New Course Bringing Some Reggio Principles Home

Beverly Gerson

Approach new ideas with a willingness to give up some old ways but careful not to create confusion and a void-experiment, exchange and adapt!

1. Revisit your space

- The environment is the 3rd teacher
- Remove clutter and create more open area
- Entry ways capture your first impression – welcome area
- Create opportunities for interactions everywhere
- Create studio art space – the atelier. Invest in quality papers, sketching pencils, paints assortment of brushes, clay etc..
- Rethink your wall space, flooring, ceiling space, storage spaces
- Bring in natural light and transform the space creating reflection, transparency, color, shadows – Examine your indirect light sources (small lamps vs. overhead lighting).
- Create places with unexpected materials – using thoughtful multi-sensory materials to stimulate visual, olfactory, auditory, textural.
- Use overhead projectors, light tables, flashlights to transform and see objects in new ways.
- Create classroom interiors using healthy green plants, fish and birds, small animals, sounds of water from an aquarium or fountain, found objects from nature carefully and aesthetically arranged, storage bins all of one color or clear to provide balance of color.
- Arrange for ample space for displaying children's projects and art in an organized and artful way

2. Parental Involvement

- Build authentic partnerships with parents
- On going communication and participation in the school's policies, curriculum, planning and evaluation
- Bridging home and school – classroom reflect the culture and interests of the families (displays of candle sticks, art forms, holiday traditions, artifacts or photos from their travels)
- Establish and maintain a **history** of the school which features both the new families and those from the past
- Create a climate of openness and two way communication

3. Include Opportunities for Project Work

- Projects involve an in dept investigation of a topic
- **Criteria for Choosing Projects (Lilian Katz & Sylvia Chard)**
 - a) It is directly observable in the children's own environment (real world)
 - b) Is within most children's experiences

- c) Offers first hand investigation and is safe
- d) Local resources are ample and readily accessible
- e) Good potential for representation in a variety of media – drawing, painting, clay, dramatic play, construction, sculptures, music, shadow play, dance, etc..
- f) Parent participation and contributions are likely
- g) It is sensitive to the local culture
- h) It is related to curriculum goals and standards

4. Explore the Hundred Languages of Children

- Provide time for children to re-visit their work, make additions and changes, make comparisons, ask question, **SLOW EVERYONE DOWN! PROCESS FIRST.**
- Teachers and children to become familiar with the physical properties of the representational media. Draw on the expertise of art teachers and artists, books and videos to venture into explorations with drawing, painting techniques, clay and sculpture.
- Invest in quality materials – Store in clear containers.

Freshly mixed paint in clear glass jars in many tints and shades

Assortment of paintbrushes, big, little, flat, round, pointed

Paper of all colors, textures, lots of white paper, transparent and semitransparent

Sharpies and good drawing pencils, hard and soft pencils, oil pastels, colored markers, pens boxes of ribbons, yarns, wire, and colored threads,

- Organize or attend workshops on using various media materials
- Consult with or hire an art director/atelierista

5. Teachers as Learners

- Develop skills in observing, recording, photographing, reflecting and documenting
- Establish collaboration among other schools and teachers
- Time for planning as a team, resource room time and consultation time
- Listen to and validate children's ideas
- Challenge children to solve problems
- Learn the art of asking questions to provoke different points of view
- Serve as a memory for children through systematic documentation

6. The Power of Documentation

- Use cameras, tape recorders, copiers, written notes of conversations and questions
- Collect information to tell a story about a project using the words, images and work of the children. This serves as a way to validate to children that their work is important and for parents and visitors it offers a window to see and understand what children know and understand
- Documentation communicates and preserves the spirit of your school

Math

Math skills are developed through concrete experiences. Numbers, sizes, shapes, sequences, correspondences, and other math concepts are a natural part of a child's daily experiences. Whenever possible, relate activities to children's natural interests.

- Hearing and using appropriate mathematical language, using counting books
- Sets and Classification
- Conservation
- One to One correspondence
- Number recognition
- Counting rote and building an understanding of the position of objects in sequence (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc)
- Equivalence matching and pairing
- Recognizing, sorting, matching Shapes-simple to complex
- Measurement
- Using concrete objects to model and solve simple addition and subtraction problems in meaningful contexts
- Establishing relationships between objects- making comparisons, exploring materials of different sizes, arranging materials in order-smallest to largest etc...
- Sequencing
- Graphing
- Patterns
- Fractions
- Seeing numerals in meaningful contexts in their daily environment- (labels, telephone numbers, etc)
- Using estimation in meaningful daily activities and checking for accuracy of estimations about quantities, size, distance and time
- Meaningful experiences that build an understanding of position and direction (up, down, low, high, above, below, next to, behind etc)



Science

Activating and fostering young children's sense of curiosity and wonder about the world around them sets the stage for lifelong joy in exploration and discovery.

- Examining and exploring materials, objects and events and describing their properties, characteristics, and capabilities, as well as similarities and differences
(earth and space science, air, weather, light/sun/shadows, periodic phenomena, life sciences, living and non living, living things and their environment, seasonal changes, habitat, physical sciences-physics/chemistry,
- Communicating children's observations through discussions, drawings, simple graphs, representations, photographs, verbal descriptions
- Simple Machines-inclines, pulleys, gears,
- 5 Senses
- Physical Properties and Energy
- Nature/Seasons/Ecology/Animals
- Shadows
- Color light & reflections
- Sound Discrimination
- Magnification
- Human Body
- Observe changes over time
- Classify
- Predict possible outcomes
- Describe the properties of objects
- Care for classroom pets, plants etc.
- Use scientific instruments



Ethan's mom, Tracy, a professor in the Chemistry Department, brings an electricity experiment.



I'm Exploring
Kwan explores the color tubes at the science table as the aquarium reflects on mirror below.

Social Studies



The foundations for learning in history and social studies are built around the child's personal experiences and understanding of the relationship of self to others (home, family, school, community, the larger world)

- Timelines through meaningful experiences (past, present, future)
- Our Preschool community- the history of the school
- To develop a sense of history as it relates to children's families
- Reading stories about historical characters and events
- Places and regions of the world- different homes (houses, apartments), neighborhoods, towns, cities, rural areas, villages,.
- Exposing children to different languages through vocabulary, songs, books etc)
- Geography and map making & study- first hand experiences that introduce children to the basic features of their immediate environment and to unfamiliar areas as well (Salem State College Campus, mountains, river, lake, Salem sea coast and oceans, ponds, forest desert, rain forests, etc.)
- To introduce the roles of community helpers- police, firefighters, nurses, etc)
- Salem- History, maritime activities, and landmarks
- Becoming aware of common community symbols (traffic signs, lights, street signs)
- Being exposed to appropriate materials and experiences that illustrate diverse cultures, (food, cooking, music, dance, clothing, etc) .People and customs from around the world.
- Experiences that build an understanding of the function of money in exchange for goods and services (setting up stores, doctor's office, hairdresser)



Music Movement Gross Motor Development



Music for young children is a language. It is a natural means for communicating feelings and ideas. This language uses musical sounds and rhythm for its expression. The young child's spontaneous movements to music help develop body strength, sensory motor control, and a better understanding of spatial relationships.

- Hearing Rhythms on words and moving the body in response to rhythms
- Introducing concepts of musical tones including their loud, soft, intensity, duration (long, short) and their pitch (high, low)
- Making rhythmic sounds with the body
- Recognize that music and dance express moods and feelings
- Enhance self concept by sharing the music and dance of each child's culture
- Listening and responding to words in a song
- Introduce relaxation exercises, learning to stretch, improve balance and coordination and rhythm
- To introduce activities to develop a child's sense of kinesthetic awareness (learning parts of the body, practicing tensing and relaxing body parts, practicing the movement of body parts
 - Experiencing the changing forms of shadows
 - Learning the feeling of direction
 - Practicing balance and experiencing directional changes
- Learning to make heavy and light movements
- Learning to relate movement to space
- Learning to move with a partner
- Learning to relate movements to others
- Finding the steady beat
- Reproducing sounds
- Recognizing identical melodies and creating original melodies and songs
- Learning that music has a form- beginning, middle, end
- Listening and responding to a variety of styles of music
- Making and playing various instruments
- Learning that different instruments have different sounds
- Learning how music complements text (Peter and the Wolf, Carnival of the Animals, The Nutcracker,)
- Listening to sounds in the environment
- Children can be encouraged toward self help skills through music
 - Eye hand coordination
 - Eye foot coordination
 - Gross motor activities that strengthen upper body strength
- Loco motor Skills
Directions, skip, run, jump, kick ball, catch/throw ball, hop, gallop, ride a tricycle

Language Arts



Children develop the basis for communication in the early childhood years, beginning with nonverbal social exchanges, then spoken language, moving to an understanding of how oral language is translated into written symbols and finally learning to decode and create written symbols to develop literacy. They begin to appreciate literacy, literature, and the joy of reading by being read to in family and educational settings.

- Perceptual and spatial Discrimination-visual and motor skills which lead to ability to see how letters are formed and then be able to reproduce them
- Beginning sounds and opposites
- Listening skills using sound jars etc....
- Beginning skills in phonemic awareness
- Left-right orientation
- Collecting words to make sentences
- Vocabulary building- receptive and expressive
- Develop an interest in/appreciation for a variety of literature and authors which include picture books, nursery rhymes, fairy tales, poetry, chapter books, dictionaries, books on various subjects
- Understanding the text- making predictions about what may happen next, analyzing stories with the 5 W's (who, what, where, when why)
- Organizing ideas in writing- in sequencing and arranging events in order
- Making connections- being informed of the title, author and illustrator of each book
- Gaining experience in formulating questions and gathering information
- Research inquiry- using the model of what children already know, what they want to know and what they have learned- expanding children's understanding of where information can be gathered
- Acting out stories in spontaneous dramatic play
- Writing stories and poems
- Rhyming words and responding to patterns of syllables
- Arranging illustrations and photographs of personal or group experiences in sequence and dictate words to describe them- "All About Me" Books" and the "ALL ABOUT US" Books
- Creating stories-Big Books, flannel, chalk, puppet shows etc
- Re-tell stories and story-telling
- Recognize and write own name
- Physical skills that relate to reading -experiences that build visual skills and awareness of the shapes that can be used to create letters and visual patterns
- Activities to develop hand strength and coordination and appropriate grasp- using hole punchers, eye droppers, clothes pins,
- Explore a variety of writing and print materials, cookbooks, telephone books, atlas, maps
- Explore all kinds of printed materials (magazines, newspapers, software,
- Using a variety of media and technology to document children's experiences, conversations etc..



All About Me Books

Children build friendships by sharing their ALL About Me books. These books of photos and facts help create connections between home and school. Pages are added throughout the year to help tell the child's story.

Neurosensory Development

Brain and body development are critically linked to the preschool years. It is through physical activity and the movement of one's own body that the human brain internalizes the conceptual foundation of laterality, directionality, and position in space. All these concepts are critical to mathematical thinking related to patterns and relationships, as well. Children need many experiences that integrate their body movements with their senses which include: tactile/touch, hearing, taste, sight, kinesthesia and vestibular sense.

Young children need to be provided with experiences that provide stimulation to the inner ear's vestibular area (e.g. rocking, swinging, rolling, turning upside down, spinning) Research indicates that such stimulation is critical to attention, memory and sensory development.

- Physical experiences that stimulate the inner ear's vestibular sense.
- Physical experiences that promote sensory motor integration
- Activities related to laterality (sense of right/left) such as hopping
- Activities to strengthen bilateral coordination (jumping, lifting with both hands, pushing a wheelbarrow, etc)
- Activities that strengthen coordination in alternating the left and right sides of the body
- Gross motor that strengthen muscles in the upper body (shoulders and arms) activities that involve pushing/supporting body weight with the arms
- Experiences that promote crossing the midline of the body (ex. Drawing lines across a full size black board without transferring the tool from one hand to the other)
- Experiences that foster integration sides of the brain (activities that include auditory as well as visual stimulation)



Health and safety

A child's state of health is continually changing and affects the way he/she behaves at a particular moment, especially the way the child learns and socializes. The degree of health and well being of a child can dramatically affect his/her attention span and attitude towards others- and in fact, the mood of the entire classroom.

- Promote regular hand washing
- Safety areas-Fire, poisons, choking, car safety, toy safety, media violence, know 911/telephone use,
- Nutrition-what the body needs to be healthy
- Making/Cooking healthy snacks
- Learning about Dental Health
- Health Care helpers/hospitals
- Learning proper use of playground equipment
- Identifying and reducing stress
- Learning about good/bad touches and how to say no to strangers
- Learning how germs are spread
- Developing good eye-care habits
- Developing an awareness of exercise and good health
- Becoming aware of the special health needs of some children and adults



Creative Arts

Children may work on drawings and paintings over many days and sometimes weeks. We focus on the process. Studio arts are a vital and vibrant part of our program. As children draw, paint, sculpt, and work with clay and wire, they begin to represent ideas and their understanding of the world.

- Express and develop creativity
- Express self through art
- Explore elements of design
- Explore variety of studio art mediums/proper use of materials/tools (painting/brush techniques, shading etc.
- Express understanding of ideas through drawings, paintings, shadow play, clay, constructions, sculptures, weavings, collages, print making etc.
- Recognize various famous artists and styles of art
- Use of light table and over-head projector to enhance the creative process
- Critique, compare, dialogue on art work-revisit and make additions and changes
- Maintain art portfolios
- Collaborative efforts- working together on projects



Let's Draw Leaves

The overhead projector helps the children see autumn in a whole new light. Maureen guides Paige (top photo) and Ryan (bottom photo) in deeper understanding of the shape and pattern of leaves

Character development **Self-concept**

- Provide opportunities for character building skills to help develop:
 - Pride
 - Cooperation
 - Patience
 - Curiosity
 - Responsibility
 - Independence
 - Tolerance
 - Determination/perseverance
 - Truthfulness

- Greet and welcome others
- Stand up for self
- Stand up for another person
- Positively contribute to the classroom
- Positively contribute to the SSC community and larger community
- Develop conflict resolution skills
- Develop self help skills
- Recognize emotions and express appropriately
- Initiate friendships-invite others to play
- Offer, accept, and request generosity, sharing, help
- Differentiate between an accident and “on purpose”
- Help make classroom rules and respect them
- Recognize the contributions from other cultural group
- Learn names of all classmates and teachers
- Recognize and celebrate own physical features
- Recognize and celebrate own home language
- Recognize and celebrate own family
- Identify and share own cultural traditions and customs
- Foster critical thinking which is bias free
 - Recognize that some people treat others unfairly because of differences
 - Resist name-calling, teasing, excluding others
 - Show concern for classmates, family, and community
 - Think for oneself and develop openness to new ideas
- Accept others
- Learn about similarities and differences
- Experience positive, respectful interactions with people who are different from oneself
- Recognize that people have same basic needs
- Recognize our community is made up of different types of people
- Increase ability to cope with change, frustration and disappointment



We gather together....

The children sort food collected for our annual Thanksgiving food drive

Fine Motor

Young children need to build strength, flexibility and coordination in the hands and fingers in order to develop appropriate grasp and control of writing/cutting tools. Until handedness is established, young children need to use whichever hand is comfortable or convenient, or to alternate hands.

- Explore a variety of manipulative materials (legos, beads, tinkertoys, etc)
- Working on a vertical or near vertical surface to allow the wrist to be extended (easel surface)
- Art activities that utilize the pincer grasp of thumb/forefinger
- Activities that involve kinesthesia (the sensation of movement of fine muscles)
- Play activities that strengthen hand grasp (squeezing clay, hole punchers etc)
- Be guided in the correct grasp of scissors
- Two handed activities and activities that can be done with either hand
- Activities that strengthen muscles in hands that support finger dexterity needed for grasp/control of writing instruments (flipping coins, small pegs in holes in pegboards)
- Activities that promote finger isolation (moving fingers individually) songs such as finger plays, piano keys or keyboards.
- Being observed by practitioners who are knowledgeable in neuosensory and motor development to determine areas of needed development



Viola', a masterpiece! With lots of poking, pinching, and squeezing, the children transform balls of clay into beautiful, realistic gourds. With the Reggio Approach, studio arts deepen the children's understanding of their world. After studying and modeling three-dimensional shapes, children are better able to represent their ideas through drawing and painting. By using a variety of media, children learn to see in many new ways.