

The staff of Kinderhaven is being more and more influenced by the philosophy and approach from Reggio Emilia, Italy, and we, as a staff and program, continue to explore and integrate these concepts, and interpret these concepts for our own culture. Below are such beliefs and concepts based on this approach.

- We believe that children are strong, capable, competent, curious, and all have great potential and a desire to learn.
- Children are viewed in terms of their relationships: to each other, teachers, family, the community, and their environment. The emphasis is on working and learning in small groups.
- Children express themselves through many “languages”. Words (spoken and written), drawings/paintings, building, sculpture, collage, dramatic play, music. Children use many materials to explore and express themselves. All “languages” are symbolic representations of what they know and understand, what they are curious about, what they feel and imagine.
- The environment is designed with purpose and intent, beauty and order. It is considered “the Third Teacher”. The environment encourages interactions, communication and the development of relationships. The classroom is valued and cared for by both children and adults.
- Teachers observe, listen to and interact with the children. They ask them thought provoking questions and guide children through investigation, discovery and exploration of themes and short and longer-term projects, and incorporate all of the skills necessary for further education.
- Teachers work together, develop and maintain strong collaborative relationships with each other. Discussion of their work and the children’s work is constant. Teachers are seen as researchers as they document their work with children and the children’s learning.
- Documentation is composed of photographs, videotape, written transcriptions of children’s actual words, written descriptions of projects and the learning process. Documentation provides a means for children to revisit their work, teachers to reflect on the children’s work and the learning process, and parents to gain a better understanding of the learning process and how children represent their learning. Documentation is also in the form of a portfolio for each child giving a visual representation of his or her learning.
- Parents are an important part of the child’s education and should be active in this learning process. Parents may act as participants in education through working in the classroom and for the good of the school, through discussions with teachers, and sharing their thoughts and ideas.

KINDERHAVEN CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

The development of our hands-on, experiential curriculum for 2 ½ to 5 ½ year olds is based on scientific research that tells us about the development of young children’s brains. We are told that it is through the use and development of children’s sensory - motor systems and through thinking (developing ideas and questions) that growth of neural connections in the brain takes place. For instance, we believe that, while it is important to learn the ABC’s and numbers (names for the letters and numbers), it is as or even more important to learn what they are and for children to begin to understand and use them. As Webster defines “thinking: ... as to form or have in the mind; to judge; to consider; to believe, expect or reason; to use the mind; to reflect; to have an opinion”, we believe that developing this ability is extremely important to the learning process. We also know that the type of environment a child is in, and interactions that he/she has plays a significant role in this development. It is our role as early childhood educators to provide learning experiences and an environment conducive to such development.

The Kinderhaven Curriculum includes ten (10) areas of Early Childhood Development. These areas are:

- **Social-emotional & Character Development**
- **Self-help**
- **Gross motor**
- **Fine motor**
- **Art**
- **Sensory**
- **Communication (receptive and expressive)**
- **Cognition (incl. thinking skills, reading, math & science)**
- **Dramatic Play**
- **Music and movement**

What follows on the next several pages is an outline of the curricular areas mentioned above and how they pertain to the Kinderhaven Program. This is written to give you an idea of our developmental curriculum in each of the areas.



1. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL and CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

When children have a positive self-image they learn better at school.

The social-emotional curriculum fosters growth in a variety of ways. Through care and respect, children are helped to feel comfortable at school, while they are away from their families. When separation from the family is a factor, we will work with the child and family to ease this transition.

We believe that self-esteem is developed through accomplishment and acknowledgement of that accomplishment. Learning experiences are provided that are at the child's level, and/or just above the child's level, all with just enough challenge so that each child will experience success and further their development.

Children at the 2 ½ and 3 year level are solitary players. As they grow, they go through a process where they parallel play (play along-side others), begin to play with another child and then, as they become more skilled socially, they are able to play in a small group of children interactively. The teachers observe the children's play skills, engage in play with them, model positive social behavior, promote social awareness and the skills necessary for social play and getting along with others. We model respect for each other and for care of our environment and promote care, respect and compassion within the classroom.



2. SELF-HELP

At the younger age, children need reminders to wash hands (with soap!), dry their hands, go to the bathroom, and when to do these things. As they develop, the reminders and assistance should become less necessary. Dressing skills progress from the initial ability of undressing self, trying to dress self, being adept at dressing (except for fasteners), to independence around the kindergarten age. Tying shoes is one of the last skills to be developed, sometimes around 1st grade. Children learn to manipulate eating utensils; they learn to serve themselves from a small serving bowl, small pitcher, and assist in setting the table. Throughout the stages of development, the teachers monitor and assist when necessary and offer encouragement and praise. The child may be able to complete part of the skill and need assistance with the rest. The teacher is there to promote learning and independence. Teachers will also promote healthy habits (ie. using soap, washing hands after going to the bathroom, before snack, before and after handling a pet, and after sneezing/blowing their nose).

We ask that as your children gain skills in these areas that we all work together to help your child become as independent as they are ready to become. For example, facilitate them washing their own hands through verbal explanations rather than doing it for them. Likewise, encourage them to learn to hang up their own coats. Even though children may complain at times, generally they feel a sense of accomplishment when they can take care of their own belongings.



3. GROSS MOTOR

We know that gross motor skills are the basis for the development of all other motor skills, and also have an impact on the development of reading, writing, language, social skills and higher-level athletic skills. At each stage of development, children engage in learning balance and coordination. Children take in information about their bodies and movement through their eyes, their muscles, tactile (or touch) system and through the organs in their inner ear that respond to movement and help develop balance. The curriculum for developing gross motor skills includes a variety of games and activities. Some of these include using the parachute, obstacle courses, music and movement games and the use of outdoor and indoor play equipment. Gross motor activities are a part of each and every day, taking the form of activities that the children choose and activities that the teachers facilitate to promote further development in the children.



4. FINE MOTOR

Before children have the fine muscle control for skilled writing, artwork, or other hand skills, children must use their hands in ways that will develop the muscles involved in those skills. Children progress from using a whole fist grasp to a thumb and finger grasp as used by adults and children generally three years of age and above. Children progress from whole arm movements to controlled use of their hands and fingers. In our program, children are provided with many daily opportunities to develop these skills. Activities such as working with play dough, clay or other moldable mediums allow children to use and strengthen the hand muscles needed for writing tasks. Teachers provide the children with daily art activities which use and will enhance their fine motor skills. Encouragement is given to participate in activities such as building with various construction materials, using small pegs, stringing beads, gears and other such manipulatives. In addition to providing the children with these activities, the teachers encourage them, work along side of them, and monitor their progress.



5. ART

The process of developing skill in and an interest in art begins with scribbling, as does the beginning of writing. Early scribbling is random and may contain some patterns. Children begin scribbling with circular motions, then progress to horizontal and vertical motions, then diagonals. They begin with singular scribbles, then combinations. Following this, children's art moves toward representational art and pictures that are recognizable (usually between the ages of 4 and 5, although earlier than this they may name or describe their art).

The art curriculum is four-fold: ***(1) that children take an interest in art, and begin to develop an appreciation for art; (2) that children are utilizing many mediums and utensils for developing their skills; (3) that children develop their creativity; and (4) that children represent their understanding of their world through art.*** The teachers provide daily opportunities for these to take place. The children are offered various mediums for exploring art, many types of utensils for broadening their usage of art materials and the time, guidance, and encouragement needed for the children's development and expression of their ideas.

"ART is the lively process of an engagement with a range of materials: an engagement that is sensual and reflective, creative and deliberate, and that deepens and extends children's learning and their communication about their feelings, their ideas, and their questions."

Ann Pelo "Exploring the Hundred Languages; Using Art Media with Young Children"

In the 2 ½ and 3 year old classes (Green, Yellow), the primary emphasis will be on children's exposure and exploration of a variety of materials. Through their exploration of media such as clay, tempera and watercolors, other paints, sculpting wire and various types of paper, and other materials, they will learn some of the mediums' properties. They will become comfortable with ways that they can manipulate the materials, begin to learn to create with them, and talk about their work.

“ART for the child is something quite different (than for an adult). For a child, art is primarily a means of expression...A child is a dynamic being; art becomes a language of thought, so that art expression changes as the child grows.”

Victor Lowenfeld (*Creative and Mental Growth*)

In the 4 and 5 year old classes, emphasis will be on developing their physical skills and at representing their ideas and knowledge through their art. Children will be exposed to and learn about various artists styles and ways to use the various media. Building on their growing knowledge and experience of art materials, they will be encouraged and be guided to develop their own individual creativity, and to discuss theirs and others' artwork.

GREEN and PURPLE CLASSES: the emphasis in this class is on participating in various works of finger-painting, using brushes, various types of paints, collage materials, wire and other textured materials, clay, playdough and other mixtures. The children are exposed to the vocabulary of art including color words, texture words and visual description of words. Work is self-directed with some possible project or theme related work. Children explore paper and various textures. Some work will be brought home other work will be documented and kept in the child's portfolio.

YELLOW CLASS: children are exposed to materials in a variety of contexts. Children learn about primary colors and mixing those colors and using a variety of paints, brushes, collage materials and textured paper. Opportunities to experiment with sculpting wire, clay, playdough and other mixtures are continually offered. Children begin sketching with pencil and fine tip markers.

BLUE CLASS: in addition to reinforcing the above, color mixing will expand to mixing with white or black to make tints and shades. Children use various paints, including tempera, water, cake tempera, and palette water colors. A large variety of collage materials is available and experimentation with a variety of attachment devices is offered. Children are encouraged to sculpt with wire and clay. Sketching of their observations and ideas is promoted. Children are introduced to various artists and styles.

RED CLASS: in addition to reinforcing the above, children mix their own colors, use of various paint media is expanded to include oil pastels and ways of using water colors; use of variety of paper, introduction of various artists and styles, use of clay, collage materials, wire, to represent ideas and observations and facilitation for children to work at higher levels of expression.



B. COMMUNICATION

A. Receptive

Through modeling, guidance, and facilitation, children work on their listening skills throughout various opportunities during the class-time. Incorporated into receptive communication is the ability to remember and comprehend. Children will also learn to distinguish between sounds and how they are used.

B. Expressive

We believe that children communicate through various expressive “languages”. These expressions take form through their verbal language, their art, play-acting, constructions, movement and interactions with each other and their materials. Children let us know their ideas, thoughts and feelings through these various “languages.”

We are committed to providing continual opportunities for the children to develop vocabulary, to expand their sentence structure and word usage, and learn about the association between letter sounds and the letters themselves. The teachers also promote creative thinking and the children's confidence to use these skills. This is done through 1:1 or group activities, discussion, story dictation, labeling of pictures, play acting and learning about new ideas and concepts. Children will engage in group or individual story creation and beginning writing of letters, words and numbers throughout their various learning experiences.



7. COGNITIVE

Cognition takes in many areas of development. These areas include, but are not limited to: the development of memory skills, curiosity, formulating questions, and an interest in learning; gaining knowledge of self and the world around them. We promote the use of numbers and letters, observational skills and logical thinking skills. Throughout the class-time teachers provide activities that utilize various materials and engage the children's senses, minds and motor abilities and facilitate learning. We provide opportunities to use already developed skills and enough challenge and encouragement to foster growth and development. Teachers ask open-ended, thought provoking questions that stimulate thinking and curiosity to learn. Specific "academic" areas of development that also fall into this category are math, science and language arts (reading and writing).

- **MATH:** In the **GREEN** and **PURPLE** classes math learning is primarily on an individual level, is hands-on and experiential, and includes singing, puzzles, sequencing, shapes of circle, square, and triangle, and simple counting and exposure to simple math language. In the **YELLOW** class math learning is primarily hands-on and experiential and through individual or small groups. Reinforcing of simple shapes along with rectangle, star, oval and diamond is done. Children will have opportunities to engage in sorting, counting, simple comparisons (such as similar/different, high/low, more/less) and words describing length, quantity and size. In the **BLUE and RED** Classes math is experiential and thought provoking, generally on an individual or small group basis, and some large groups. The above concepts are reinforced and counting objects will increase. Sorting and classifying by multiple characteristics, working with more complex patterns, making comparisons adding small numbers in their heads and working out simple word problems are promoted.
- **SCIENCE:** In all classes curiosity and wonder are encouraged and built upon. Science learning is hands-on and experiential. Activities are presented in a multi-sensory fashion. Children are exposed to and become familiar with proper terminology. *Children's questions are regarded as important and will be encouraged to use their questions as a basis for discussion and research.* In addition: In the **GREEN** and **PURPLE** classes, children will explore their natural environment and topics will solely relate to close, observable happenings. In the **YELLOW** class children will explore their natural environment shadows, weather and seasons. In the **BLUE** class, children will explore their natural environment, classroom pet, concepts of night and day, basic needs of living things, relationships of living things. They will be introduced to the scientific method. In the **RED** class, the above will be reinforced and they will be introduced to magnets, gravity and earth in relationship to the universe. Topics will be explored at a deeper level. Use of the scientific method will be promoted.
- **LANGUAGE ARTS:** There are various ways in which children communicate their ideas, thoughts, questions, perceptions and beliefs. Commonly a language arts curriculum includes listening, reading, and writing. We believe that art expression, dance, drama and music also are part of the way in which children communicate, and thus, should be a part of the language arts curriculum. In all classes, books are always available. Reading is always a part of each day. Reading includes nursery rhymes, poetry, good children's literature and literature that supports projects. Questions and discussions about the readings are encouraged. Children have many opportunities to use a variety of writing implements. In the **GREEN** and **PURPLE** classes reading is individual and in groups. Children have opportunities to act out nursery rhymes. Scribbling represents the beginning of writing. The art curriculum supports language arts through its use as self-expression. Children have opportunities to interpret and move to music and engage in dramatic play. In the **YELLOW** class reading is individual or in small groups, some large groups. Children have opportunities to act out stories and make up their own stories. Writing opportunities are available in various parts of the room. Children are encouraged to express their thoughts using various art forms, music, dance and drama. In the **BLUE** class stories and poetry are a little more complex. There are more and longer discussions. Writing opportunities are available in various parts of the room. Children begin printing letters and name, begin sounding out words and making a connection between letters and sounds. Children have opportunities to interpret meaning and thought through books, poetry, music, dance, art, and drama. Look for more detail in their work. In the **RED** class children will have the same opportunities as above. Facilitation will encourage higher levels of representation. In addition, children will engage in journal writing, printing of their name and some words, sounding out more words and letter sounds associations. Discussions, questions and explanations are expected to be at a higher level.



8. DRAMATIC PLAY

Through dramatic play children of all ages develop many abilities and skills. Children develop their imagination and creative thinking skills. This play promotes social interaction, social negotiation and problem solving. Through participation in dramatic play children develop the ability to take on new roles and engage in imagination and pretending. This also gives them the opportunity to take on a new perspective and to develop empathy. The children can also use role-playing to act out situations in their own lives and come to an understanding of a particular situation. Dramatic play gives children the opportunity to use and develop their verbal communication, creativity and develop an interest in stories, story telling and plot development. This, in turn, assists in literacy development and an interest in reading.

Teachers provide a stimulating, yet comfortable environment that fosters dramatic play. Children are able to take on different roles through dress-up clothes, props and puppets. Teachers observe children's play, engage in dramatic play with them, extending their language and thought process. Teachers may pose situations or stories for the children to role-play. Children may become a part of acting out short stories such as simple nursery rhymes, short stories, to acting out short stories that they've authored.



9. MUSIC

This part of the curriculum is designed to expose children to a variety of types of music (i.e. classical, jazz, calypso and simple children's songs) and music with various ethnic influences. Through this children can learn to appreciate many different sounds. Through the use of music and musical instruments children will explore musical sounds and the use of instruments. (*Green* and *Purple* Classes: rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, tambourines; *Yellow* Class: same plus handled castanets and tone blocks; *Blue* and *Red* Classes: same plus triangle, xylophone and piano, and learning about rhythm, pitch, beat, melody and tempo, and notes as symbols). They will be exposed to and learn many of the names of instruments while using them. Through music, children will experience movement to music, how to keep a beat, singing and using music to have fun. Musical experiences may also improve their listening skills, attention span and memory skills. Many researchers say that learning and participating in musical activities has a positive impact on learning math and language.

In all of the classes, light music is played as background music during center time, small group or snack time. The children have daily opportunities to sing and move to music.



10. SENSORY

Children learn about themselves and their environment through the use of their senses. We provide an environment that stimulates and/or requires the children to use their senses of vision, auditory, smell, taste, tactile and kinesthetic senses. We encourage children to use their senses when engaging in activities throughout the classroom.

People may all have a predominant sense that they use to take in information. Some of us are predominantly visual learners, auditory learners or tactile/kinesthetic learners. But people, especially children, have potential to develop their other senses, which will enhance their learning capabilities

SUMMARY

One can see that all learning is a very interdependent process. In learning how to think, in skill development and gaining knowledge, we use our senses, take in information, interpret and process this information and then act on it.

Writing with a pencil – a task that most of us take for granted – is not such a simple task. It is a very interdependent process that relies on the eyes, muscles and joints and sensory feedback.

Children learn through interaction with each other, their teachers and other adults, and their environment. We provide an environment and specific learning experiences in which children can develop, grow and learn. We set up specific learning situations in which all these areas are promoted and enhanced. We help children develop tools to take with them to higher academic, social, artistic, and skill levels. And we provide opportunities for them to gain knowledge about themselves and the world around them.

Together with you, their parents, we strive to enrich the lives of your children and help prepare them for their future.

PROJECTS, THEMES & UNITS

The teachers at Kinderhaven support various approaches to learning and see the value in each of these. The staff endeavors to develop learning experiences, themes and longer term projects that are interesting to the children and base this on expressed/observed interests of currently enrolled children, general knowledge of what children's interests are, and also on knowledge about what children need to know. You may find some repetitions from year to year. As all knowledge is built on previous knowledge, this repetition gives the teachers the opportunity to expand on and enhance children's learning. In other words, children will be learning at a higher level.

If you have any questions about our curriculum, please feel free to discuss it with one of our educators or the director.

KINDERHAVEN CURRICULUM

GUIDE TO OUR WORK WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

2007/2008



"If children are excited, curious, resourceful, and confident about their ability to figure things out and eager to exchange opinions with other adults and children, they are bound to go on learning, particularly when they are out of the classroom and throughout the rest of their lives."

*Constance Kamii in The Primary Program:
Growing and Learning in the Heartland*