

## Curriculum Philosophy

At PreschoolFirst, our team of experienced early childhood specialists believes that learning in the early years must take place through active, hands-on play. We believe that in order to develop as a “whole child,” children need high quality learning opportunities to explore the world and interact in positive ways with each other and caring adults. Our curricula philosophy is based upon research that supports “whole child” development in five domains: fine and gross motor, social-emotional (including approaches to learning), communication, and cognition.

PreschoolFirst believes that learning should begin with what a child *knows and can do*, and that educators then carefully provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities to scaffold his or her developmental progress. When young children master abilities and skills through play, they not only develop confidence, a positive disposition toward learning, and a practical foundation for abstract learning, but they also exhibit a higher language level, more innovation, greater empathy and cooperation, better problem-solving strategies, and longer and greater attention spans (Smilansky 1990)—all essential characteristics of learning readiness (Ready for School Goal Team 2000).

Learning happens best in an early childhood environments in which young children engage in appropriate hands-on activity and connect social,

emotional, physical, and cognitive experiences through

- repeated meaningful social and concrete interactions;
- multiple situations to use imagination to wonder, dream, and expand notions of the real world and complex abstract concepts; and
- varied opportunities to integrate play with learning experiences and link old and new knowledge.

PreschoolFirst’s developmentally appropriate curriculum resource integrates developmental behaviors into a library of hands-on learning experiences or activities for children 0-66 months of age. This helps teachers and programs provide experiences that meet each child’s unique needs, developing abilities and interests. These types of experiences invite children to use their knowledge and skills, thus strengthening positive dispositions toward learning (Katz 1993).



PreschoolFirst curriculum is specifically designed to be *one* intentional learning experience offered along with several other open-ended experiences during a “choice time” or activity period. Children are given many opportunities to make meaningful choices—from both open-ended activities and those from the PreschoolFirst curricula—and are actively engaged in their learning process. All content areas such as early literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, and the creative arts are integrated into this developmental



framework of age-appropriate learning activities. This integration results in a comprehensive system that enables the educator to provide developmentally appropriate curriculum that promotes children’s learning and keeps them actively engaged in exploration, creativity and constructive processes.

The PreschoolFirst team of experienced early childhood specialists fully research and develop all curriculum and makes a special effort to approach all content related to gender, sexual orientation, age, language, ability, race, religion, family structure, background, or culture with respect. Special attention is given to all content and resources to ensure it is appropriate and has educational value for children from various ages levels with a range of developmentally appropriate abilities; both genders; and those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and family structures.

### Resources:

Blaustein, M. 2005. See Hear Touch! The basics of learning readiness. *Beyond the Journal • Young Children on the Web*. Washington, DC: NAEYC. Online: <http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200507/01Blaustein.pdf>.

Bredenkamp, S. & Copple, C. (Eds.). 2009. *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs*. Third ed. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Pp. 120-129, 171-175.

Bruner, J. 1977. *The Process of Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children. 1998. Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children. *Young Children* 53: (4). Washington, DC. Pgs. 30-46.

Katz, L.G. 1993. *Dispositions as educational goals*. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. ED 363454. Online: <http://www.ericdigests.org/1994/goals.htm>.

Ready for School Goal Team. 2000. *North Carolina School Readiness Assessment: Strategies for defining, measuring, and promoting success for all children*. Greensboro, NC: SERVE 8, 24. Online: <http://www.smartstart-nc.org/professionals/schoolreadinessfull.pdf>.

Smilansky, S. 1990. Sociodramatic play: *Its relevance to behavior and achievement in schools*. In *Children's play and learning: Perspectives and policy implications*, eds. E. Klugman and S. Smilansky, 18-42. New York: Teachers College Press.