

Lesley Ellis School

Curriculum Guidelines: Pre-kindergarten

2014-2015

Mission

Lesley Ellis School's outstanding and innovative academic program emphasizes critical thinking skills. We value what makes our children unique, and we encourage them to apply their own talents and passions to their learning. Our community is centered on the values of mutual respect and global citizenship.

Core Values

•**Accepting**

We are open and accepting: a place where everyone feels at home.

•**Caring**

We are caring and supportive. We take time to nurture and know each other.

•**Collaborative**

We work together to create an environment where each child's potential is fulfilled.

•**Creative**

Learning is fun. Our teachers are passionate and creative.

•**Respectful**

We respect each other's differences and unique qualities.

•**Thoughtful**

We make our decisions based on what is best for each child.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

The social and emotional curriculum builds upon children's intrapersonal and interpersonal skills by focusing on themes of individual choice, emotions, self-awareness, and awareness of group needs. Many children come to school with some understanding of self, home, and family. As they learn how to become members of a group, children begin to understand how they are alike and different from their peers. Children work through separation and connection as they become comfortable leaving their parents and moving into their classroom community. In both large and small groups, children learn to express their feelings verbally as they make suggestions about play and attempt to resolve conflicts that may arise.

While using the family as a springboard for discussions, many children will begin to broaden their understanding of classmates and in turn, society. Children begin to learn about individual rights and responsibility as they help create classroom guidelines. Open discussions about acceptance lay the foundation for children's self-respect and respect for others. Much emphasis is placed upon the importance of individual planning, choice, and decision-making. Teachers read stories that depict characters' planning and choosing actions in the process of conflict resolution. Children are always encouraged to think through various possibilities and potential consequences before acting. Furthermore, they begin to realize that the choices they make often affect others, as well as themselves.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

Emotional

- Internalize and follow simple classroom routines and rules
- Take risks in trying new things
- Accept redirection
- Choose activities without assistance
- Remain with an activity until it is completed
- Display perseverance and pride in accomplishments
- Transition smoothly from one activity to the next
- Progress along the developmental trajectory in self-help skills

Social

- Respect classmates and classroom materials
- Take turns
- Display a caring attitude toward peers
- Show a balance of initiating and accepting ideas for play
- Attempt to resolve conflicts verbally and in a developmentally appropriate manner
- Demonstrate an awareness of group needs
- Play cooperatively and share

Learning Looks Like This:

A teacher reads the story, This Is Our House, by Michael Rosen. As the children listen, the story describes how one child won't let anyone into a cardboard box that he pretends is his own house. As he continues to exclude people for different reasons, the children in the class show frustrated faces and begin to offer comments and questions. "Why does the little boy not want anyone to come in?" "Everyone has different hair, he's not being very nice." "It's not okay to tell people that they can't come in unless they are a stranger and then you ask your parents" "There are a lot of nice things to say, you just have to be nice to your friends."

The teacher supports them in thinking about the situation from multiple perspectives. "What do you think the girl felt like when he said she couldn't come in?" "How do you think he's feeling as he says 'no' to all his friends – is he having fun and feeling happy?" As the children continue to discuss the story, they relate times they have been excluded, and share how they feel when this happens. The teacher asks everyone to make a face showing what it looks like when they are upset or frustrated, and asks children what they can do when they see a friend whose face looks like this. "You could say I will play with you," one child suggests, and another says, "I'd say, don't be sad, let's have fun!" Another child says "You could say, why are you sad, maybe their stomach hurts." They talk about what they can do if they see a friend being excluded, and discuss making a classroom guideline, "You can't say you can't play." The teacher writes the guideline on a large sheet of paper and teachers help children sign it, and display it in the classroom near the meeting area.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Communication, thinking and self-expression are the primary functions of language. The goal of the Pre-kindergarten language arts curriculum is to build upon existing skills to create a community of active and interested communicators. Language skills involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Using these skills children enhance interpersonal relationships in the classroom. Teachers encourage children to practice expressive language skills like learning how to rhyme, singing songs, and reciting poems. Dramatization of books provides students opportunities to actively use and internalize "book language."

Exposure to all aspects of language through print-rich environments and child centered, multi-sensory activities lays the foundation for future literacy readiness. Books are always available in the classroom library and teachers often read stories at the children's request. Pre-writing opportunities are abundant as children engage in painting, drawing, digging, and sculpting. These activities strengthen the hand musculature that they will need for later writing tasks. Children interact with the alphabet through activities like matching, Bingo, letter scavenger hunts, puzzles, and magnetic letters. A description of children's work, transcribed by teachers, helps students to recognize the symbolic nature of print. Children often transition to making their own "words" by a scribble, stream of letters, or even temporary spelling. Children also practice the correct motor actions in letter formation through drawing and tracing activities. Through literacy experiences children gain phonological processing skills, language skills, and pre-writing skills that will lead them to the writing and early reading they will practice in Kindergarten.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY OBJECTIVES:**Language Skills**

- Retell stories
- Repeat songs and poems
- Articulate clearly

- Participate in small and large group discussions
- Ask relevant questions and make relevant comments
- Express thoughts clearly and accurately
- Identify and use rhyming words
- Recognize and use descriptive words
- Use developmentally appropriate grammar
- Develop vocabulary and ask meaning of unfamiliar words
- Develop skills in comprehension – active listening, character empathy, making connections, event sequencing, inference, prediction
- Follow 2-3 step directions

Pre-Reading

- Identify own name in print
- Identify **all** uppercase and some lowercase letters
- Manipulate sounds in language, segmenting and substituting sounds in words
- Develop knowledge of sound-symbol correspondence
- Understand the connection between print and the spoken word
- Demonstrate concepts of print, such as left-to-right progression
- Begin to understand the structure of sentences
- Explore a variety of literature including fiction, poetry, biography
- Compare and contrast books by the same author or illustrator

Pre-writing

- Make representational drawings
- Use a developmentally appropriate grasp
- Establish ‘handedness’
- Learn and begin to use the correct motor movements involved in writing letters and numbers
- Progress along a trajectory from scribbles to controlled scribbles to forming letters
- Write for a purpose – using ‘writing’ in make-believe play and other classroom activities
- Write first name and/or other familiar words

Learning Looks Like This:

On a snowy February day the children gather at meeting time. The teacher places a poster on the easel. It has large print and an illustration of a bare tree. The teacher tells the children that they will be learning a new poem and asks if anyone can use the words and illustrations to guess what the story is going to be about. Immediately hands are raised, and the teacher calls upon several children for their ideas. One child says, “I think it’s going to be about a dead tree because the tree has no leaves.” Another child offers, “One of the words begins with a ‘W.’ I know that because my name has a ‘W’ in it.” The teacher continues to point out the interesting connections they are making.

She then reads, “Tree in Winter,” carefully pointing to the words on the poster. A few children attend to her movement along the print while others remain focused on her voice. After hearing the poem once, the children are encouraged to recite the poem together. One child even volunteers to point to the words for his classmates. As the week continues the children have learned the poem,

and they take a walk to observe the trees outside in winter, reciting the words to their poem as they walk.

LEARNING

In our Pre-kindergarten program, we provide children with stimulating hands-on activities that help them build skills, acquire concepts, think creatively, and develop a genuine interest in learning. Children in our program learn by actively exploring the classroom environment, experimenting with open-ended materials, asking questions, and developing theories. The active wondering and exploration that occur in Pre-K serve as a powerful foundation for later academic learning.

Mathematics

The foundation for the mathematics curriculum at the Pre-kindergarten level is based on the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards. This curriculum provides children with opportunities to explore, manipulate, and experiment with objects and materials. Mathematical content knowledge is centered on number sense and operations, patterns, geometry, measurement, logic, and collection of data. Children are encouraged to explore with manipulatives such as Cuisenaire rods, pattern blocks, Geo-boards, unit blocks, and scales. Through such explorations children develop spatial awareness, enhance logical thinking, and learn how to solve problems as they relate to everyday life. Children also learn that their peers may have similar or different ways to solve mathematical problems. Additional materials and lessons enhance Pre-kindergarten students' understanding of mathematical concepts.

MATHEMATICS OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize and label basic shapes
- Sort and classify by attributes such as size and shape
- Recognize and create simple patterns
- Rote count and identify in print 0 to 20
- Count using one-to-one correspondence
- Make connections between numerals and quantity
- Make simple spatial connections (puzzles)
- Explore with mathematical manipulatives
- Begin to understand sequential order
- Understand ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.)
- Utilize mathematical concepts in play (counting, measuring, comparing size)
- Develop estimating and measuring skills
- Collect data and create and analyze graphs
- Use a variety of problem-solving strategies

Learning Looks Like This:

A child walks over to the bean sprouts that her class has been growing. She opens her folder at the table, has a seat, and quickly flips to the bar graph that she has been working on each week. Examining the beansprouts, she tells a friend, "I think they will be taller today." As she looks at her graph she notices that the beans were three Unifix cubes (non-standard measure) tall the last time

she measured. She finds the Unifix cubes on the shelf and snaps three of them together. Holding the cubes next to one bean sprout she exclaims, “I was right, they are taller today!”

A teacher takes a seat next to the children and says, “Let’s predict how many more cubes you will have to add today.” One of the children states, “Just add one.” The other says, “I think three!” The teacher suggests, “Let’s add one cube at a time until the column of cubes is the same height as the bean sprout.” After adding two cubes to the column, the children agree that the cubes are now as tall as the bean sprouts. “If the bean sprouts were three cubes tall last time and we added on two cubes today, how tall are they now?” One child reaches for her graph to color in three squares and then adds two more in another color. After counting the squares together the children proclaim, “Five, the bean stalks are five cubes tall!”

Science

Science for children, like mathematics, is an active process of inquiry. Meaningful science learning in the early childhood years happens when teachers plan activities around “big ideas” or concepts that children are developmentally primed to acquire. Our teachers create a physical environment that supports inquiry, plan specific activities, and then support the children’s own investigations. In order for children to develop a true understanding of concepts, we provide them with ample time to explore materials, make predictions, and create and revise theories. Our teachers help children consolidate and deepen their learning by encouraging them to reflect on, document, and share their experiences. Through the processes of prediction, trial and error, and observation, children build the foundation for more complex learning in all areas of science. Specifically, classrooms are exposed to physical science, life science, earth science, and engineering.

Teachers integrate science across the curriculum. For example, a connection occurs as experimentation leads to drawing pictures of the steps that occurred and then writing a class journal. The children may write a poem or sing a song about their investigations. Classrooms may visit the library to check out a book on a relevant topic, or they may play a game in the gym that challenges their understanding of what they have learned about colors, numbers, shapes, or movement. Science is also approached globally as children study other environments as well as scientists from around the world.

SCIENCE OBJECTIVES:

Physical Sciences

- Observe, describe and compare properties of various materials (brittle, smooth, round, rectangular, liquid, solid, long, short)
- Experiment with motion and force
- Experiment with liquids and solids
- Experiment with a variety of objects to determine point of balance

Life Sciences

- Observe and measure the growth and movement of living things
- Compare and contrast living and non-living things
- Notice similarities and differences between plants and animals
- Explore the life cycles of plants and animals
- Observe plants and animals in various habitats and understand their needs

Earth Sciences

- Recognize seasonal names and their characteristics
- Explores physical properties of the natural world (air, water, rocks, soil)
- Observe and record daily weather and seasonal changes
- Explore how the sun's energy affects living and non-living things
- Observe scientific phenomena with repeating patterns (day and night, seasons, weather)

Learning Looks Like This:

Two children enter the classroom and notice a few classmates gathered around a teacher reading a book about woodland animals. As they join the group, the teacher points out a page filled with pictures of animals and the tracks their paws leave behind in the mud. One by one, children match the animals with corresponding tracks on the page. The teacher asks, "Can you describe the size and shape of each animal print?" As the group begins asking more questions about the animals, the teacher moves the children to a few tables, providing them with clay, cardboard cut-outs, and appropriate tools for making the woodland animal tracks.

Molding the clay, the children comment on the differences and similarities of the animal tracks. One child says, "Look how small my hand is compared to the bear claw." Another exclaims, "I have more fingers than some of the animals." The children then begin to discuss the uses of front legs and hind legs in comparison to human hands and feet. One more child describes, "Rabbits need strong back feet to jump higher." The teacher provides a bit more clay and asks each of the children to make their own handprints. As the clay pieces dry, the class has created a list of similarities and differences of their own handprints to the tracks of the woodland animals.

Arts

Creative expression through the arts is an integral component of our PreK program. Throughout each day, children have various opportunities to paint, draw, create collages and other creative projects, sing, dance, and engage in dramatic play. We encourage children to experiment repeatedly with basic art materials so that they gain proficiency and confidence. We focus on the process of creating art, rather than what the end product looks like. Children participate in singing and music every day during group times and often during classroom transitions, such as singing a "clean up" song. Children develop rhythmic awareness by using percussion instruments, dancing to music, and participating in directed movement games. There are abundant opportunities for dramatic play; children "cook" in the child-size kitchen set, take care of baby dolls, dress up in dress-up clothes for a "party," practice using the doctor's kit, and more. Through their pretend play children process concepts from their daily lives and develop abstract thinking skills.

ARTS OBJECTIVES:

- Develop basic proficiency with using paint, glue, crayons, and markers
- Explore the properties of various art materials through experimentation
- Listen to and participate in class singing activities
- Develop an awareness of rhythm, as explored through percussion instruments and movement to music
- Engage in make-believe play scenarios

Learning Looks Like This:

A few children gather around the art table, examining the various objects that are laid out: a toothbrush, a hairbrush, a whisk, a fork, textured rolling pins, a sponge, and more. The teacher points out the trays of red and yellow paint that are on the table and gives each child a large piece of paper. The teacher encourages the children to paint with the objects. Tentatively at first, the children dip the objects into paint and make marks on their paper, examining the unusual patterns that the objects create. Within a minute, the children have gained confidence and begin to experiment with the objects. A child dips the toothbrush into the red paint and makes a light mark on the paper, and then immediately dips the toothbrush into the yellow paint and paints heavily over the red marks. "I made a different color!" the child exclaims. "I see that!" responds the teacher. "How did you do it?" "I mixed red and yellow...and it made orange," says the child excitedly. "I want to try!" enthuses another child, who then tries mixing red and yellow paint on a piece of paper using the whisk. Pretty soon the children's papers are covered in an array of red, yellow and orange patterns. The teacher makes comments on each child's paper as he/she works. "I see that you are making circles with the sponge and lines with the hairbrush," the teacher says to one of the children. "Yes," the child replies as her brush strokes become more rapid, "It's a hurricane, and it's getting stronger!" The next day the children arrive at school to find their "gadget paintings" hanging proudly on the wall.

ANTI-BIAS

Children are aware of and affected by human differences from an early age, and our community is based on respecting and appreciating the similarities and differences found within our school, neighborhoods, and throughout the world. This strong emphasis on anti-bias education promotes a sense of belonging for all students and builds a sense of connection between people.

The goal of the anti-bias curriculum is to challenge the impact of bias on the students' social and intellectual development by helping them acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to live respectfully in a diverse community.

While keeping the children's developmental level in mind, the anti-bias curriculum introduces children to challenging vocabulary, reflective topics, and brings abstract ideas into real practice. The curriculum builds upon itself, encouraging the students to move along a continuum from knowledge to understanding to tolerance to acceptance to respect and inclusion. Throughout all of their learning, the students are encouraged to develop and actively participate in lessons to end the cycle of bias. The anti-bias curriculum focuses on, but is not limited to, eight major areas of bias. These include racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, religious intolerance, and size discrimination. Through direct, pro-active instruction, as well as using everyday events within the classroom and the larger world, the curriculum is integrated into all aspects of the students' school experience. Monthly events, such as all-school assemblies are often springboards for further learning experiences.

Above all, we are working to instill in the students a respect for themselves, their classmates, and their community, while providing each child with strategies for actively improving the social conditions of all of those around them.

ANTI-BIAS OBJECTIVES:

- Help children develop a sense of self-identity
- Participate in a caring community where sharing is highly valued

- Establish a feeling of openness, comfort, and safety in the classroom
- Help children feel comfortable with people from diverse backgrounds
- Be able to label and identify actions as fair and unfair
- Gain an understanding of the many differences in the world through literature, puzzles, pictures, and other daily classroom materials
- Discuss inclusion/exclusion based on race, gender, class, age, ability, and family structure
- Discuss gender identity while exploring and challenging traditional gender roles
- Identify differences and similarities of skin tone and describe own skin color
- Learn about scientific basis for skin color
- Explore differences between concepts of want and need
- Recognize and identify different ages (infant, child, etc.)
- Recognize differences and similarities of age related abilities
- Recognize own personal abilities and limitations
- Recognize similarities and differences with regard to people's abilities
- Recognize that there are a variety of family structures
- Recognize that there are families that are similar to and/or different from one's own, but the common factor is that they all love each other

Learning Looks Like This:

The children have been reading stories with their teachers about people with different abilities. They notice that nobody in the classroom has a wheelchair. One of the teachers asks the children to describe how a child would go through the school using a wheelchair. "How would you swing, go upstairs, get to the playground, and how would you move around the classroom?" The teacher showed the students a photo of a friend who uses a wheelchair and plays sports. The children remark, "Wow, look at how he is in the race!" "His hands must be strong!" "Is it hard to keep sitting for that long?" "We could have him teach us how to go so fast." "Can we show him what sports we know?" "Can he come to our school to visit?"

On the way to the playground, the teacher points out the sign for the elevator in the school and demonstrates how someone in a wheelchair may get upstairs to the hallway and then into the classroom. The children begin to describe a special walkway that would let a person in a wheelchair move to every part of the playground. When they return to the classroom they make a book about their ideas, Our Newest Friend, and the teacher suggests having her friend who uses a wheelchair visit the classroom soon.

PHYSICAL

At Lesley Ellis children have many opportunities to engage in movement activities both indoors and outside. On the playground children run and climb, developing strength, balance and coordination. In the classroom, movement and dancing activities help children gain a sense of their bodies in space. Using the materials in the writing, art, and math centers helps develop children's fine motor skills. Over time, as children's fine motor skills and abstract thinking skills grow, scribbles become representational drawings with increasing detail. We help children become more independent by encouraging them to wash their hands, open their lunch containers and put on their coats by themselves.

OBJECTIVES:

Gross Motor

- Run and walk with increasing coordination
- Climb stairs and basic playground equipment independently
- Jump with two feet
- Balance on one foot
- Gain an awareness of her/his body in space
- Throw and catch a large ball with two hands

Fine Motor

- Begin to hold writing implements with an appropriate (tripod) grasp
- Begin to show preference for using a dominant hand
- Learn the motor movements involved in cutting and develop along a trajectory from snipping to cutting across a sheet of paper
- Manipulate and assemble small toys; string large beads

Self-Care

- Wash and dry hands independently
- Put on clothes or coat with minimal help
- Open lunch containers with minimal help
- Progress along the developmental trajectory toward independent toileting

Learning Looks Like This:

The teacher notices a child sitting at the writing table holding scissors with two hands, trying unsuccessfully to cut paper. The teacher approaches the child and asks, "Have you tried holding the scissors like this?" while gently guiding the child's fingers of one hand into the proper places on the scissors' handles. The teacher then holds the paper toward the child and says encouragingly, "Try again. And remember to keep your thumb pointing up toward the ceiling." The child looks at the scissors for a moment, takes the paper from the teacher and tentatively makes a snip with the scissors. The paper cuts easily. The child, surprised, looks up at the teacher with a delighted smile and then spends the next few minutes practicing this exciting new skill.