STUDENT AND EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK
OF
PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM AND PRACTICE

for use in the
University of North Texas
Child Development Laboratory

Dr. Carol Hagen, Director

www.coe.unt.edu/cdl

Adaptations may be made when students are placed at other centers.
This handbook of procedures for use in preschool programs has been prepared for use by Head Teachers, paid student staff, university practicum, field experience and student teachers. The guidelines provided here are intended to help you understand how to implement best practices with young children in early childhood classrooms. These guidelines will not answer all your questions; young children are unique, and many different kinds of problems, which have not been addressed here, may arise. When you have questions, ask the Head Teacher under whose supervision you work. Further questions and concerns can be brought to the Director.
University of North Texas

Child Development Laboratory

Philosophy

We are a laboratory nursery school within the College of Education with teacher training in developmentally appropriate practice as our primary goal. We provide early childhood classroom and observation areas where students may observe and practice appropriate guidance techniques and curriculum under the supervision of degreed early childhood/child development specialists in a model setting. Our program is based on the following beliefs:

1. Young children learn by doing. They construct and acquire knowledge through playful interaction with the physical and social world. Children are motivated to learn by their desire to make sense of the fascinating world around them.

2. Because of the way young children learn, which is based on their sensory and motor development, teachers act as guides and facilitators rather than lecturers. They prepare the environment, observe children's understanding, and add challenges to push their thinking further. This takes place in a classroom environment based on a centers approach, with ongoing changes in materials and activities.
3. Each child is unique. This is expected, accepted and used in the planning of appropriate activities. Children differ in their cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic background. Differences in abilities, maturation, and learning style occur in the areas of physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth. Experiences are provided to meet children's needs in all of these growth areas.

4. All interactions, activities, and materials are designed to develop self-esteem and positive feelings toward learning.

5. Exploration and opportunities to make choices are considered in the planning of classroom activities. Children are involved in discovery learning, and are expected to be physically and mentally active. Creativity and problem-solving are encouraged.

6. Children work mostly in small informal groups or individually. Large group interactions are kept to short periods of time related to the development of the children.

7. Materials used are concrete. They encourage child involvement and manipulation and are relevant to the child's life experiences.

8. There is a focus on the development of self-control rather than adult-control. This is fostered by the use of positive guidance techniques, including modeling, encouraging expected behaviors, redirecting, and the setting of clear limits. Opportunities for developing social skills such as cooperation, negotiation, and assisting others are provided to children, and competition is discouraged.
9. An abundance of opportunities, which provide meaningful experience in language and literacy, are included on a daily basis. Instruction in isolated skill development is not relevant for young children, and worksheets are not used. Appropriate activities include hearing stories and poems, dictating individual stories and language experience stories, taking field trips, participating in dramatic play, and other experiences allowing active communication.

Program Curriculum

The curriculum, which is used in the Child Development Lab, is not a pre-determined and fixed set of information. Rather, it is ongoing, based on the program philosophy and the individual children enrolled in the program. Each semester, Head Teachers cooperate to design a list of weekly topics or themes. These are generally similar for all classrooms (i.e., Chinese New Year, Ponds and Puddles), but are implemented by each teacher to meet needs of children in her group. This topic outline also allows the many preprofessionals involved in the program to plan and prepare for their participation in the classroom.

Each teacher writes weekly lesson plans. These are posted in the classroom for use by practicum students, and are available for observers of the program, including parents. Teachers' plans for individual needs may not be posted, according to the discretion of the teacher.
Children at the Child Development Laboratory are provided with many opportunities for growth and learning in the following areas:

1. **Knowledge.** This includes facts, concepts, stories, songs, and other types of information which may be useful or enjoyable for the child to know. Material should relate in some way to the lives of the individual children, as well as being relevant to young children in general.

2. **Skills.** Skills are small units of action, easily observable, which occur in a relatively short period of time. These may include motor and social skills, printing, counting, etc., which can be improved through practice that is most often child initiated.

3. **Dispositions.** Dispositions are tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways, and can be thought of as habits of mind. Friendliness, creativity, curiosity, cooperativeness are examples of dispositions which we hope to foster. They are learned primarily from being around those who have and exhibit these characteristics, and by being given opportunities to act in such ways, so that these behaviors can be acknowledged, appreciated, and strengthened.

4. **Feelings.** While some feelings may be innate, many are learned. Feelings of confidence, competence, and security are important, along with the ability to understand and let others know what one's particular feelings are at any given time.
In all four of these areas of learning, children should be not only exposed to, but actively engaged in the learning process. The total curriculum seeks to develop intellectual and personal competence by fostering the development of problem-solving skills, openness, autonomy and personal integrity.

Art

1. No models or patterns are to be used. Encourage children to "make it the way you want." It is tempting to draw for children, especially when they ask you to do so. Resist the temptation, and allow children to be creative.

2. All materials are available for the children’s use. Anything they are not to use is stored in offices or closets. No food items may be used for art or play materials in any part of the program.

3. Sleeves are rolled up (not pushed) so that the inside of the sleeve is exposed, if possible.

4. Spread newspaper on tables before beginning messy projects. Do not use easel paper or other purchased products for this purpose.

5. Children wear smocks for painting, using chalk, and other projects which might soil clothing.
6. Large sheets of paper are to be used for all painting and drawing projects. Smaller paper is used for cutting, gluing, etc. Help children use scissors for cutting paper only, and watch scissor use.

7. After asking permission, carefully print the child's name in the upper left corner of the child's work. (Older children may want to take over this task.) Begin with a capital, then use lower-case letters.

8. Small amounts of paint, glue, etc., should be put out, in containers which do not tip. Add more as needed.

9. Model and teach skills related to process (show children how to clean excess paint off brushes to lessen drips, how to roll clay under the palm of the hand, etc.). At the same time, take care not to interfere with children's creativity.

10. Wash brushes and paint-cup caps at the end of the session. Wipe out easel trays. The Head Teacher will give further instructions as appropriate.

11. The Head Teacher will give you instructions about art work to go home. Work which is displayed in the room should be at child's eye level.

12. Put dirty smocks in washing machine as needed.

13. Wash glue cups, brushes, and glue bottle caps with soap and warm water at the end of each session.
14. Check for lids and caps on all markers, play dough containers, etc.

Lunch

1. Children bring lunch of a nutritious nature from home for their noon meal. (Parents receive information on proper nutrition in accordance with Texas licensing guidelines). Lunches are placed on designated shelves, which are washed daily, or more often as needed.

2. Tables are cleaned following Texas Child Care Licensing Standards: soap, paper towels, rinsing and spray with bleach, children help with any clean-up.

3. Children wash hands with soap before sitting down to eat. They remain seated until finished. If reminders are necessary, positive statements are used: "Pull your chair up close, so you can see all your food."

   "Stay at the table until you are finished, Joe. After lunch, there will be time to play with our friends."

4. Mealtime should be pleasant, quiet and relaxing. Sit with the children and make quiet comments about the good foods their families have prepared for them. Stay attentive to children's needs. Open thermoses and wrappers as needed, cut apples or sandwiches if a child requests or agrees to this. Make sure all food gets out of the lunch box and onto the table. Encourage, but do not force
children to eat. A child's natural hunger should suffice. Don't allow food to be used in a power struggle between you and the child.

5. Encourage good manners, use of napkin, etc. If children begin to play with food, pouring pudding on a sandwich, etc., say, "It looks like you have had enough to eat. I'll help you put your lunch away."

6. Children should not share food. Germs are passed, and some children may be taken advantage of. Use positive statements: "John's family sent those cookies for him, Jill. You can eat these grapes your Daddy packed just for you."

7. Whenever possible, uneaten food should be rewrapped and returned to the lunch box. This helps parents assess quantities eaten and food likes and dislikes, and may lessen waste. As children finish eating, assist them in disposing of trash, repacking lunch boxes and replacing them in the designated area. Make sure caps are on thermoses, spoons go home, etc. Parents should not have to take home a leaky lunch box.

8. Children wash hands and faces after eating. Assist with tooth brushing as needed. Direct children to the next activity as instructed by the Head Teacher.

9. Request assistance in further guidance techniques or for a particular problem from the Head Teacher who is on duty and is your supervisor at that time. (A staff change occurs at 12:30; ask if you are unsure who is on duty.)
Nap time

1. Most younger children who are here the full day, and any child whose parents request it, take a nap in the multi-purpose room after lunch.

2. Each has a cot with a clean sheet and an individual name tag designating the user. Sheets are laundered each Friday afternoon, and clean ones are put on.

3. A chart on the wall indicates the placement of cots, so children sleep in the same place every day. Teachers may use a "nap ticket" to help children with the nap routine.

4. All children use the restroom before coming in to nap.

5. Shoes and socks are removed so children can sleep comfortably. Check for sand in shoes, pant cuffs, etc., and dispose of appropriately.

6. Most children have a blanket and/or soft toy from home to assist them in getting to sleep. Some children may require a back rub or other personal attention; others prefer not to be touched.

7. Children sleep from about 1:00 until 2:30, according to need. Those who do not fall asleep return to the classroom at 1:45. Occasionally, a child who is especially tired may be taken to the nap area, or a place in the classroom. Naps are not used to punish children who are being disruptive.
8. After nap time, children are taken back to their teacher with shoes on.

9. Children are never left alone in the nap room. Adults on duty stay attentive and responsive to children's needs.

10. Cots are returned, blankets put away, and blinds opened before the teacher in charge leaves the nap room.

Playground


2. Station yourself in all parts of the playground, and be alert to move fast when necessary.

3. Sand toys stay in the sand box. No toys are to be carried onto climbing apparatus or into other areas where they might be a danger to children below.

4. Tricycles stay on the bike path, away from the gate area. Tape marks on the sidewalk may be used as guidelines. Point them out to children who need reminders.

5. The area inside of the barn, the fence and gate are off limits to children.
6. When going outside, a teacher always goes out first. Children are not allowed to return to the classroom without teacher supervision.

7. Cups, tissues, wipes, and a first aid box are kept in the barn to be used under adult supervision. Cups are placed in the trash can immediately after use, and are not carried into the play area.

8. When wading pools are used, they are emptied immediately after use. No water is to be left standing without adult supervision at any time.

9. In chilly or cold weather, children go outside dressed appropriately. Assist with coat zippers, hat ties, etc., and encourage children to help each other. Extra mittens, hats and jackets are available for children who need them. Check with the Head Teacher.

Rest Time

1. Rest time lasts about 15 minutes. It is a quiet time, which provides a break in the day between active periods. It is not intended that children sleep. All staff and students present in the room should be models for the children. Children are less likely to rest when adults are bustling about and making preparations. All materials should be prepared in advance. Children may be allowed to assist you in setting out materials after rest time is over (or before it begins).
2. Some children may require a back rub or other personal attention in order to begin to rest quietly. Others may prefer not to be touched.

3. Children should be placed strategically in the classroom, so they will be least likely to bother each other. Each should be clearly visible to those adults supervising them. Adults also should place themselves strategically, and focus their attention on the children, maintaining a quiet restful atmosphere. Teachers may choose to allow this to be a time when children quietly look at books.

Snacks

1. All foods prepared in the nursery school should be of a nutritious nature. Sweets, ready-mixed or processed foods are not used. (Birthday treats sent by parents are an exception.) Food is never used as an art or play material.

2. Children are to be involved in the preparation of all snacks. Allow children to assist by cleaning vegetables, measuring and stirring, washing tables, passing out cups and napkins, etc. If time runs short, save the food project for a day when there is time for children to help. Serve crackers and juice on busy days.

3. Limit special snacks to two or three times a week, for budget purposes. Serve graham crackers, soda crackers, or popcorn on other days. Serve water as a drink often when fruits, vegetables or other special foods are being served.
4. Limit quantity of food served for snack - 2 graham crackers, half an apple, etc., is plenty. Children should **not** eat until they are full - then lunch/dinner becomes a problem.

5. Use extra care in cleanliness procedures. All fruits/vegetables should be washed well. Children (and teachers) should wash hands with soap. Send children who put fingers in mouths, sneeze, etc., back to wash again. Make sure spoons and spreading tools are not shared (providing one for each child will prevent this).

6. Use caution in the selection and supervision of cutting tools and small appliances. Make sure cords are placed out of the way and are kept dry. Use cutting boards when appropriate, and plastic or metal utensils rather than glass. If heat is used, exercise extreme caution. Children enjoy and are excited by cooking activities. **Watch closely**, and make each experience a safe one.

7. Add extra water and ice to juices - the purpose is to provide liquid refreshment, not extra calories.

8. At snack time, plan ahead, and "place" children who have difficulties away from each other. Sit with children, and join their conversation. You are welcome to eat what the children are eating while sitting with them (neither adults nor children should stand or walk while eating). **Model** good manners for children - "would you please pass...?"
9. As they finish, help children push in chairs and deposit trash appropriately. Allow children who spill to assist in the clean-up.

10. Ask the Head Teacher about possible food allergies among the children.

Guidance

1. Give directions and make suggestions in a positive form. Avoid using "no" and "don't" as much as possible. Tell the child what to do rather than what not to do. Example: "Janie, ride your tricycle here on the bike path," (rather than "Don't ride on the grass.")

2. Speak quietly, clearly, and make demands and suggestions in short and simple terms. Wait until you are sure the child is listening before beginning. Be sure the child understands what you have said and what you expect. Example: "It's time to wash your hands for lunch."

3. Give the child a choice only if there is a choice. "Would you like to take a nap now?" has 2 possible answers. "Please sit down here, okay?" turns a statement into a question. (Eliminate "okay?" from the end of sentences.) Choices can help children develop independence and initiative, and are usually better accepted than direct commands. Example: "It's not our time to go outside now. You can paint a picture or I will read you a story."
4. Expect children to do what you ask of them. They are most likely to respond and respect the person who makes confident, reasonable demands which have been carefully thought through, and which are spoken in a calm, friendly, but sure voice.

5. Encourage the behaviors you want by encouraging (commenting on) the actions you hope to see repeated, and not the child. "Wow, you worked hard to make that table clean and shiny" is much more effective than "What a good girl you are." Avoid using sentences which start with "I like the way you...", or otherwise focus on the adult perspective. Empower children by beginning statements with "You..".

6. Be consistent. Cutting play dough with scissors may or may not be allowed, but the rule should be the same every day. (That doesn't mean you can't have snacks out under the trees on a beautiful afternoon. Don't confuse consistency with inflexibility.)

7. Feel comfortable with experimentation. Encourage children to find out for themselves, but offer help as necessary to avoid feelings of failure or discouragement.

8. Expect some testing of limits, and accept children's right to resist without feeling threatened by it. Repeat your expectations in a calm, confident way.
9. Set few, but clear limits for behavior. Keep the "Big 3" in mind. 1. We do not hurt people and other living things. 2. We do not destroy property, materials, toys, etc. 3. We do not harm the learning environment (by screaming, taking what others have, interfering with their activity, etc.).

10. Allow children opportunities to solve conflicts unless physical injury or other serious mishaps may occur. Be an interested watcher. When adults interfere too quickly, opportunities for learning may be lost. Think before you speak and act. Help children think of possible solutions to choose from if you need to become involved. This allows children to become more self-reliant, to solve problems and to practice cooperative behaviors.

11. When intervention is necessary, redirection usually proves helpful. Send a child to another more calming activity; water table, painting, and playdough activities can be soothing for young children. Use positive statements. Example: "Children don't like being hit with blocks, Jason. You can play at the water table or read stories now. Another day you will remember to use blocks just for building." It may be necessary to separate two children for a short time. Example: "Eric, I need someone to wash this table. John, you can feed the gerbils".

12. Protect children's safety at all times. Stop or change activities which may be dangerous. Examples: "Stay in your seat while you eat, Abby. If you are
moving, the food might go down wrong and you could choke." "Let me hold the watering can while you run. Runners need empty hands."

13. **Model** behaviors and **show** children how to perform new actions. Treating children with respect, saying "please" and "thank you" to them are vivid examples which can be copied. Dipping the sponge in water, carefully wringing it out, feeling the dampness, and then scrubbing the table are actions which show the child exactly how the job is done. Words are easily forgotten, but actions which are observed consistently are internalized and repeated.

14. **Allow** plenty of time. Hurrying children confuses them, can increase anxiety and activity levels, and lessens learning. Letting children know several minutes before the end of an activity allows them time to adjust and prepare for the change about to take place.

15. Be accepting of differences in children, and sensitive to individual needs. Some like to joke; others are serious. Some are unsure in new situations; others are more adaptable. Many have some trouble with transitions. Accept and respect all children, showing no preferences or prejudices. Comparing children encourages feelings of competition, as well as feelings of ill will.

16. **Allow** children time to become familiar with you. They see many new faces each week. Be natural and friendly, but do not force yourself on them.
Professional Behavior

1. Remember that you are a teacher, and you want children to treat you as one. Focus your attention on the children and what they are doing. Save discussions with other students, whether or not they pertain to the children, until after you are "off-duty".

2. Families from many cultures participate in our program, and some may be sensitive about dress which might be seen as immodest. Dress casually, but in a way that lets others know you are serious about being a professional teacher. Pants, longer shorts (close to knee level) and sleeveless clothing are acceptable, and tummies and back must be covered. Short shorts, halter tops, etc., are not appropriate for teachers in a school setting.

3. As a professional, treat all information you gain about children and their families with strict confidentiality. Share information and ask questions only with the Head Teacher, the Director and your course instructor.

4. At the same time, remember that Texas state law requires anyone suspecting child abuse or neglect to report this information to the Texas Department of Human Services or a law enforcement agency. Confidential reports may be made by calling 1-800-252-5400. You may ask the Director for assistance if you wish, but you must take action. Failure to report is a punishable crime.
5. At all times, help to ensure the health and safety of children under your care and of yourself. Watch for situations and materials which might be potentially harmful to children. Be prepared to act quickly. Protect yourself and the children by frequent hand washing and using latex gloves, taking particular care with blood and other body fluids. Be prepared to assist in an emergency, following the Head Teacher's orders. Emergency information is posted near each door and next to the office phone.