

CURRICULUM AREAS

AREAS OF LIFE EXPERIENCE

The curriculum of the 5th City Preschool attempts to deal with the total life experience of the child and consists of four main arenas which are based on ways of experiencing life:

- a) the basic skills developed to give form to experience math, language, reading, and writing,
- b) one's sociality in the midst of the economic, political, and cultural aspects of life,
- c) individual drives and responses to life, and
- d) decisional relationships to all of life.

These four contentless arenas, Basic, Relational, Psychological, and Imaginal, are rehearsed every, and the content of each comes from a yearly curriculum rationale created by the staff and covering a comprehensive selection of material.

BASIC

The Basic area deals with the symbol systems. It is through the symbols of math and language in all their forms, organized to pass on knowledge about oneself and the world. The curriculum construct talks about this area in terms of Recognition, Reproduction, and Relationship. The recognition of symbols brings to self-consciousness that which one knows; the ability to reproduce them gives form to ideas and allows communication with others; and the ability to discern relationships between them creates a context out of which new ideas emerge. At the preschool age this symbol system is dealt with at its most fundamental level that of objectively impacting the children with objects, concepts, and experiences, then naming them and relating them to spoken and written symbols. The degree of abstraction increases with age. For instance, if the concept being taught were "gravity", the infants would watch released objects fall to the ground and hear the terms "fall" and "down". Mini schoolers (two-year olds), in addition, might jump off a step, drop objects, be shown the words as they are said and be asked to repeat them. Prep school (three and four year olds) might be called to self-consciousness of the force of gravity when they are asked by the teacher to jump into the air and stay there. The term "force", an abstract concept could then begin to take on meaning for them. Kinder-schoolers, after experiencing the force of gravity might be exposed to the idea that the mass of the earth pulls matter toward its center and that that pull is called "gravity".

In the Basic area the child is trained in mathematics through exposure to spatial relations, patterns, one-to-one relationships, counting, sets, numerals and other fundamental mathematical concepts. Reading readiness skills, to right progression, similarities and differences expansion, and phonics are used as well as early procedures. Visual perception, manual dexterity recognition and reproduction begin the writing portion; language is called forth in songs, rituals, games, and conversation. This curriculum portion is where the child is trained to think logically thru communication and symbols.

RELATIONAL

The Relational curriculum deals with the child's relationships to his family, community, city, nation, world, and universe as one who is an economic, political, and cultural human being. The economic process is that social process by which society provides for its actual physical existence. Without it there would be no political or cultural development. The economic process sustains individual life, the life of each society, and of mankind as a whole. It calls for social organization and provides for fundamental areas around which to create common understanding. In every human society, the political process comprises the activities of structuring the given raw power, or order; implementing the will of the people, or justice; and serving the corporate wellbeing, or welfare. The cultural process is the rational pole of the social process. It injects meaning into life and thereby gives significance to all the aspects of society. It is on the basis of wisdom, style and symbols that every political decision is made and every economic product distributed.

In the Relational area the child is made aware of being related through events, discussion and art activity. For example, in the area of the economic the class might take a trip to a farm and watch cows being milked, or to a factory where coke bottles are being filled and talk about the work involved, the process of distribution, the need for money to buy the product etc. In talking about the political process one might use puppets and act out the different ways that decisions are made in the family and the different roles that the family members, particularly the child, play. To bring self-consciousness to the cultural arena the teacher might act out the style of the particular

neighborhood that the children live in and have visitors from other countries come in to demonstrate styles of dress, language, eating, movement etc. The children might then use clay to model several of these styles followed by placing them on a map of the world to demonstrate the great variety of cultures in the world.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

In the Psychological area of the curriculum, the individual response of the child is brought to consciousness. Here one becomes aware of one'sself as a biological being with physical needs and drives, a social being who exists in the midst of a multiplicity of relationships, and a rational being who desires to know oneself and the meaning of existence. This is the area where the solitary response of the child is emphasized and affirmed; this is the area where the creative thrust of the child to know and understand, to do and create, to be and relate is acknowledged and reflected upon.

The Psychological curriculum block is immediately after nap every day, a time when the child is in a quiet and reflective mood, and experiencing being a solitary person with many situations to which to respond. The curriculum, using the tools of poetry, dance, and art, allows the child to reflect upon self as a solitary being, and gives a way to begin to articulate one's experience. A curriculum event in the biological area might be centered around potty training, particularly for the two year olds. An event in the social area might begin to focus on the emotions such as anger and joy which a child experiences while playing with friends. In the arena of the rational an event might be centered around the questions a child asks about who one is, why big or small, or black or white, why dog died etc. This is the area where the child deals directly with own, most personal response to life.

IMAGINAL

In the Imaginal area of the curriculum the focus is on the relationship of the child to limits, possibilities, and freedom to make decisions. Although the "imaginal" area is the basis of the whole preschool program and runs through all the curriculum blocks, the songs, and the rituals, it is at this time of the day each day that the imaginal emphasis is intensified in a curriculum event.

Everyone experiences life's limits (being too tall or too short, bumping a head on the cupboard door, falling down, hearing a loud "No" to something the heart is set on), the list could go on and on. To try to get rid of limits would be useless for limits are just a part of life. In this part of the Imaginal curriculum the purpose is to help the child see that many of these limits cannot be changed but that one can decide how to relate to them, whether to foolishly fight them, or to relate to them positively and thus be able to respond creatively to life within the confines of limits. There is possibility at every point, of saying either no, or yes to the situation, and it is precisely here that freedom is found.