

## PROGRAM GOALS – Pre-K

Although all children learn differently, most have a general need in each stage of their childhood that can be met by their caregiver. At Mill Pond we strive to create an environment that supports children at each stage of their development.

**Preschool:** At preschool age, children are learning many cognitive skills to prepare them for kindergarten. For some educators, it is natural to dismiss the importance of play and hands on experiences at this age and spend more time on structured, teacher directed lessons where children sit at tables and do worksheets. There are other educators who feel that preschoolers are too young and immature to handle such rigorous work as reading, writing and arithmetic, so they provided an environment that is all play without incorporating any cognitive learning. At MPNS we believe that the best environment for preschoolers is one that consists of much developmentally appropriate play with cognitive learning incorporated. We strive to support the preschoolers need to play by encouraging them to explore, inquire, and discover. We believe that by supporting each child's curiosity to learn and their creativity through hands on experiences, that they will be more than ready for Kindergarten.

### Significance of preschool stage:

The most important area is for adults to promote preschooler's self-esteem. In every area of his development: physical, cognitive, psychosocial, the child strives and looks for adult support. Children need periodic adult reinforcement in the form of one-on-one time, a hug, smile or touch.

Preschoolers have a greater capacity than younger children for learning and abiding by simple rules and clear consequences.

They enjoy playing with peers. The beginning of cooperative play and sharing develops. Conflicts can begin to be addressed with simple problem solving techniques.

Preschoolers develop in many areas and independence is promoted by providing choices in a wide range of activities for this age group.

### Program Goals:

1. To build self-confidence and a sense of self worth, by allowing choices within limits and to build on successful experiences
2. To promote and instill a sense of caring for, and sensitivity towards others
3. To provide a nurturing, relaxed and non-sexist environment with caring adults where self-esteem is enhanced; independence encouraged; free choice decisions offered; social skills acquired; and individuality respected
4. To provide large portions of time where the child can be alone or with friends participating in a range of different and satisfying activities. The activities will be planned for the following curriculum areas: art, science, history, geography, wood working, cooking, music and movement, practical life, dramatic play, language arts, and mathematics
5. To provide children with opportunities to gain competence in a variety of skills and techniques that increase their interest and control over their environment
6. To provide for each child's physical well being while in our care

7. To provide opportunities to develop gross motor skills and coordination through physically active play
8. To develop in the child an active curiosity about the world in which he/she lives, and an enthusiasm for learning which stimulates exploratory behavior and creativity
9. To help the child gain self-discipline in an environment where he/she knows the limits and expectations
10. To develop in each child an appreciation for beauty and nature
11. To provide an atmosphere in the classroom which promotes respect for self, others, and materials
12. To provide a wide variety of activities within a routine where cooperative play/work is encouraged and multiple skills are developed. Through these activities, children are learning to trust their own desires/decisions about what they will learn, hear, see and do and to begin sharing these experiences with others.

Many times when parents observe or visit preschools/child care centers, they think that children are "just playing". However, the way children learn best is through play. Robert Fulghum states, "Learning is taking place at all times in all circumstances for every person." What looks like "just play" to an adult, is the child learning, growing and developing new skills. Some examples of what children are learning through play in our centers include:

Language Arts Center promotes:

- Vocabulary growth
- Listening skills
- Reading readiness skills
- Oral language skills
- Interest in and respect for books
- Appreciation of good literature
- Imagination
- Increased attention span

Outdoor Play Area:

- Develops large muscle coordination
- Increases social development and communication skills
- Provides opportunities for sharing
- Provides opportunities for roll playing
- Fosters safety awareness

Math Centers help a child:

- Recognize numbers, counting items
- Understand the relationship between a numeral and a set of objects
- Learn that counting is both meaningful and fun
- Understand such terms as big/little, more/less, etc
- Recognize and name basic geometric shapes

- Become aware of and begin to appreciate the practical uses of numbers seen around him/her every day, e.g. clocks, calendars, money, etc.

#### Practical Life Areas:

- Encourage the children to do tasks on their own
- Promote eye hand coordination, patience, waiting turns, etc.
- Give opportunities for hand washing, practicing proper meal manners, grace and courtesy lessons
- Help children explore zipping, snapping, buckling, scooping and pouring, sorting, wiping tables, using materials properly
- Provide opportunities for pouring milk, juice, cereal; setting tables, preparing food, taste and smell comparisons, sharing

#### Art Centers:

- Provide opportunities for creativity and imagination
- Develop small and large muscle skills
- Develop color concepts
- Provide a release for positive and negative feelings
- Develop reading readiness skills
- Develop prewriting skills
- Encourage an appreciation for the arts

#### Manipulative/Sensorial Activities:

- Develop small muscle coordination
- Increase social development and communication skills
- Foster imagination
- Teach mathematical concepts (shapes, size, counting)
- Provide opportunities for problem solving

#### Dramatic Play Areas:

- Provide an opportunity to role play home/life experiences
- Increase social development and communication skills
- Develop small and large muscle coordination
- Develop self awareness
- Develop visual discrimination skills

#### Block Play:

- Provides practice with social skills
- Develops gross and fine motor skills
- Teaches mathematical concepts (shape, size, balance, counting)
- Increases creativity and decision making skills
- Develops visual discrimination skills
- Provides an opportunity for role play
- Increases communication skills and oral vocabulary

#### Reading/Quiet Area:

- Develop and improve listening skills
- Teach the letters of the alphabet and their sounds, as children become interested
- Develop the skill of matching
- Provide quiet areas and the opportunity for a child to:
  - Learn to relax
  - Learn to appreciate and enjoy good books
  - Learn to enjoy being alone

#### Science Centers:

- Develop an awareness of and respect for the natural environment
- Develop observation and discrimination skills
- Encourage a child's curiosity
- Encourage sorting and classifying skills on the basis of size, shape and texture -
  - Develop an awareness of their bodies

#### Music and Movement:

- Develops listening skills
- Encourages children to learn musical tunes which they can sing and words which they can repeat
- Helps a child learn to control motor impulses
- Promotes enjoyment and appreciation for music
- Expresses freedom of movement and awareness of the body and space
- Provides exploration and familiarity with different musical instruments