

LEARN Every Day

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The mission of a quality curriculum should be a strengths-based approach, that is designed in a way that respects individual differences, honors every child's culture, and recognizes that family members are equal partners in a child's education.

- **Literacy, math, science, social studies, and creative arts in each unit**
- **Experiences that encourage exploration and discovery**
- **Activities designed for multisensory learning**
- **Research-based, developmentally appropriate methods**
- **Nurturing environments that support all learners**

Literacy

The ultimate goal of literacy instruction is to ensure that all children are successful when formal reading instruction begins. The literacy experiences in a quality curriculum are built into large group, small group, and learning center activities.

1. **Listening Skills**-Listening is the foundation for all literacy development. Research has shown that the more children are spoken to and listened to, the better listening skills they will develop. As children learn to listen for details, prioritize the information they hear, follow directions, listen to stories, and participate in conversations they further develop listening skills.
2. **Oral Language Development**-The key components of oral language are vocabulary and appropriate grammar. The size of a child's vocabulary is one of the best predictors of how successful a reader that child will become. Vocabulary-building opportunities incorporated daily during group discussion or while singing or listening to stories and poems enable teachers to provide intentional and purposeful instruction.
3. **Letter Knowledge and Recognition**-Letter knowledge involves the ability to recognize all 26 letters of the alphabet in both uppercase and lowercase forms and to understand that letters are the foundation of all words. As young children learn to see letters as independent components that can be organized in many ways, they become more fluent speakers and more active listeners.

4. **Print Awareness-**Print awareness evolves as children are exposed to print throughout their daily lives. As children develop the knowledge that printed words move from left to right and from top to bottom, and that print has many functions they build their print awareness skills. These functions include labeling items, creating lists, conveying information, telling stories based on books, and recognizing environmental print.

5. **Phonological Awareness-** Phonological awareness is sensitivity to sound. It includes recognition that sounds are the same and different, onomatopoeia words, match rhyming word pairs, and identifying the repetitive sound in an alliterative phrase or sentence.
 - a. **Alliteration** — Repetition of a consonant sound in a series of words, such as, “Terry Tiger treated Timothy Turtle to a tasty tidbit.” Children are able to hear the repetition of the /t/ sound, but do not necessarily need to identify that the sound is made by the letter *t*.
 - b. **Onomatopoeia** — Identifying words that sound like what they describe, for example, *pitter-patter*, *moo*, *quack*, *beep*, and so on.
 - c. **Rhyming words** — Recognizing words with the same ending sound.
 - d. **Segmentation** — Breaking words into their component sounds.
 - e. **Sound discrimination** — Hearing the similarities and differences in sounds.

6. **Comprehension-** As children have an opportunity to retell stories in their own words, act out stories, and listen to stories that are not accompanied by illustrations, they develop comprehension. Comprehension is enhanced as children use higher-level thinking skills, make applications, conduct analyses, experiment with synthesis, and make evaluations. In addition, understanding how authors describe settings, develop characters, and organize the storyline helps young children craft their own stories.

Math

The math activities focus on more than just numbers, operations, geometry, and measurement. In keeping with the recommendation of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), algebra and data analysis are to be woven into all activities.

1. Algebra at the preschool level means children are developing skills that help them think and reason about relationships.
2. Activities such as manipulating pattern blocks, making their own patterns, arranging objects according to a rule, and recognizing patterns they observe in the environment help children learn to solve problems mathematically.
3. Emerging geometry skills are encouraged as children identify object attributes, develop their measurement skills, and create a foundation for data analysis.
4. As children collect and sort items by their attributes, they are learning a key component of the ability to represent, analyze, and interpret mathematical data.

Science

The science component in a quality curriculum should be designed to ensure that children entering kindergarten will have a working knowledge about the natural world, including understanding cause and effect; recognition of some of the differences between animate and inanimate objects; a basic knowledge of the ways in which people's beliefs, goals, and desires affect behavior; and a rudimentary understanding of substances and their properties.

The curriculum must include concepts that are related to

- physics
- biology
- psychology
- chemistry

Scientific elements introduced in a quality curriculum include the following:

- ✓ the scientific method
- ✓ a working knowledge that germs can transmit disease
- ✓ the life cycle of a plant
- ✓ how animals and people grow and develop across time
- ✓ opportunities to participate in simple, developmentally appropriate scientific experiments
- ✓ increasing opportunities to ask information seeking questions of adults

Social Studies

Social studies permeates the preschool classroom, from learning about celebrations and community helpers to exploring identity in terms of family, culture, and community. Preschoolers begin their social studies explorations as they examine themselves, their families, and their community.

The natural curiosity of preschool-age children is enhanced as they begin forming relationships outside of their own families and exploring the world around them. While social studies involves learning about the world and its people, it also leads to the development of a strong social–emotional center as children begin to take on the perspectives of others, while becoming active participants in the larger world in which they live.

The Creative Arts

The expected outcomes from children participating in the creative activities within the curriculum include:

- ✓ **developing the imagination while refining problem-solving and critical-thinking skills**
- ✓ **discovering a sense of craftsmanship, quality task performance, and goal setting—important skills for lifelong learning**
- ✓ **increasing self-confidence and self-discipline by imagining what might be**
- ✓ **accepting responsibility to complete tasks from start to finish**
- ✓ **the nurturing of values, including team-building skills and respecting alternative viewpoints.**

Research-Based, Developmentally Appropriate Methods

Principles outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) as being crucial components of best practice.

These principles are summarized as follows:

- All domains (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive) are interconnected and impacted by what takes place in the others.
- Development moves toward a greater complexity, self-regulation, and symbolic or representational capacities.
- Consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive interactions with peers help children reach their maximum potential.
- The role of culture influences learning.
- Because children learn in many different ways, a wide range of teaching methods is required.
- Play is important for developing social–emotional skills, language, and problem-solving strategies.
- The learning environment should be challenging because children learn best when they have multiple opportunities to practice what they learn.
- Hands-on learning is meaningful.
- The experiences children have shape their motivation, as well as their behavior.

Nurturing Environments that Support All Learners

Special Needs

Children with special needs learn best in settings with their typically developing peers

Dual Language Learners (DLLs)

Opportunities exist for children who do not speak English as their native language.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a strategy used to provide learning opportunities for students who are at risk for academic failure. This is especially important in terms of early literacy, as research indicates literacy is the strongest single predictor of success in academics as well as social development. For students in your classroom who are not meeting early literacy milestones, the *Nemours BrightStart! The Complete Program for Early Literacy Success* is a recommended companion for any curriculum.

Extended Learning

Enrichment and other tips for enhancing the learning for children who need a more challenging environment.