

PROGRAM GOALS - Infants

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.

Infants: The first step of development for an infant is trust. In our infant class we strive to provide a comfortable and predictable environment where infants feel at ease with the opportunities to explore themselves and the world around them.

Each infant has different schedules reflective of his/her own personality. It is the adult's role to accept each infant's uniqueness and provide a safe and stimulating environment in which to grow.

The infant program provides for the following goals:

1. To care for infants in a warm, affectionate way that lets each child know that he/she is a special person, including the physical affection and cuddling that is so important at this stage of development
2. To meet each child's physical needs fully
3. To implement strict sanitation procedures that are adhered to, faithfully
4. To provide opportunities for exploring, learning and social interaction through a variety of daily activities
5. To prepare activities to stimulate the senses, recognizing that infants learn through the use of their eyes, ears, fingers, sense of taste and smell
6. To prevent over-stimulation and disorder; and to provide opportunities for one-to-one interactions between children and staff
7. To provide opportunities for the use of large and small motor skills with both indoor and outdoor activities
8. To provide a safe environment for exploration
9. To provide a consistency between Child Care and Home Care practices that will be most beneficial to the infant and will offer the parents an opportunity to influence the kind of care that their child receives.
10. To establish an observation system in which a daily outline/check list on each child is kept
11. To be supportive of parents, encouraging involvement, education, and open, honest communication while using tact and discretion

Infants learn by experiencing the environment through their senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling), by physically moving around and through social interactions. Non-mobile infants absorb and organize a great deal of information about the world around them, so adults need to talk and sing with them about what is happening and bring them objects to observe and manipulate. At times, adults carry non-mobile infants around the environment to show them interesting events and people. Mobile infants and toddlers increasingly use toys, language, and other learning materials in their play. Adults play a vital socialization role with infants. Warm, positive relationships with adults help infants develop

a sense of trust in the world and feelings of competence. These interactions are critical for the development of the children's healthy self-esteem. The trusted adult becomes the secure base from which the mobile infant explores the environment.

The most appropriate teaching technique for this age group is to give ample opportunities for the children to use repetition to practice newly acquired skills and to experience feelings of autonomy and success. Infants will bat at, grasp, bang, or drop their toys. Imitation, hiding, and naming games are also important for learning at this age.

Play opportunities are essential throughout early childhood. For infants this means sensory experiences and adults who cuddle and talk to them. It means careful selection of toys and materials that stimulate and challenge them, but are not over-stimulating. As the infants become more mobile, they should be able to count on a safe and interesting environment to explore. Some activities for this age group might include: scooting on the floor, looking in a reflective mirror, reaching for objects to grasp. Language activities that begin as "Ma Ma" or "Da Da" will soon become extended through repeating words of an adult's stories, songs and finger plays. Opportunities to develop large muscles can be found in walking, climbing up and down, pushing toys; and for small muscles, in sensory play with water, sand, etc.: feeling different textures, stacking blocks, nesting toys, etc. Art activities are provided to give infants an exposure to a variety of materials and enjoyment for the process of the project.

An infant can feel secure and develop a sense of trust as the adults in his/her world respond to individual needs of hunger, thirst, sleep, and security with a flexible and individualized daily routine.