

Setting The Stage For Learning
A comprehensive curriculum resource for children aged 3 to 6.

*Setting the Stage is committed to providing a developmental program for children. In accordance with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), this curriculum resource **adheres to the following principles:***

The manual for “Setting the Stage for Learning” stresses the importance of the following principles and their connection in utilizing this curriculum system. The format of using both guided lessons and independent exploration are clear and facilitate the following:

- Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.*
- Children are active learners, drawing on direct physical and social experience as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their own understanding of the world around them.*
- Development and learning result from interactions of biological maturation and the environment, which includes both the physical and social worlds that children live in.*
- Play is an important vehicle for children's social, emotional, and cognitive development, as well as a reflection of their development.*
- Development advances when children have the opportunities to practice newly acquired skills, as well as when they experience a challenge just beyond the level of present mastery.*
- Children demonstrate different modes of knowing and learning and different ways of representing what they know.*

The curriculum resource also follows the NAEYC guidelines for creating developmentally appropriate practices.

- Creating a caring community of learners*
- Teaching to enhance development and learning*
- Teachers create an intellectually engaging, responsive environment to promote each child's learning and development.*
- Teachers use their knowledge about children in general and the particular children in the group as well as their familiarity with what children need to learn and develop in each curriculum area to organize the environment and plan curriculum and teaching strategies.*
- Teachers provide children with a rich variety of experiences, projects, materials, problems, and ideas to explore and investigate, ensuring that these are worthy of children's attention.*

- *Teachers provide children with opportunities to make meaningful choices and time to explore through active involvement. Teachers offer children the choice to participate in a small-group or a solitary activity, assist and guide children who are not yet able to use and enjoy child-choice activity periods, and provide opportunities for practice of skills as a self-chosen activity.*
- *Teachers organize the daily and weekly schedule and allocate time so as to provide children with extended blocks of time in which to engage in play, projects, and /or study in integrated curriculum.*
- *Teachers make plans to enable children to attain key curriculum goals across various disciplines, such as language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art music, physical education, and health.*
- *Teachers incorporate a wide variety of experiences, materials and equipment, and teaching strategies in constructing curriculum to accommodate a broad range of children's individual differences in prior experiences, maturation rates, styles of learning, needs, and interests.*
- *Teachers bring each child's home culture and language into the shared culture of the school so that the unique contributions of each group are recognized and valued by others.*
- *Teachers foster children's collaboration with peers on interesting, important enterprises.*
- *Teachers develop, refine, and use a wide repertoire of teaching strategies to enhance children's learning and development.*
- *To help children develop their initiative, teachers encourage them to choose and plan their own learning activities.*
- *Teachers pose problems, ask questions, and make comments and suggestions that stimulate children's thinking and extend their learning.*
- *Teachers extend the range of children's interests and the scope of their thought through presenting novel experiences and introducing stimulating ideas, problems, experiences, or hypotheses.*
- *To sustain an individual child's effort or engagement in purposeful activities, teachers select from a range of strategies, including but not limited to modeling, demonstrating specific skills, and providing information, focused attention, physical proximity, verbal encouragement, reinforcement and other behavioral procedures, as well as additional structure and modification of equipment or schedules as needed.*
- *Teachers coach and/or directly guide children in the acquisition of specific skills as needed.*
- *Teachers calibrate the complexity and challenge of activities to suit children's level of skill and knowledge, increasing the challenge as children gain competence and understanding.*
- *Teachers provide cues and other forms of "scaffolding" that enable the child to succeed in a task that is just beyond his or her ability to complete alone.*
- *To strengthen children's sense of competence and confidence as learners, motivation to persist, and willingness to take risks, teachers provide experiences for children to be genuinely successful and to be challenged.*
- *To enhance children's conceptual understanding, teachers use various strategies that encourage children to reflect on and "revisit" their learning experiences.*

In Constructing appropriate curriculum, “Setting the Stage for Learning” addresses the following:

- a) *Developmentally appropriate curriculum provides for all areas of a child's development: physical, emotional, social, linguistic, aesthetic, and cognitive.*
- b) *Curriculum includes a broad range of content across disciplines that are socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to children.*
- c) *Curriculum builds upon what children already know and are able to do (activating prior knowledge) to consolidate their learning and to foster their acquisition of new concepts and skills.*
- d) *Effective curriculum plans frequently integrates across traditional subject-matter divisions to help children make meaningful connections and provide opportunities for rich conceptual development; focusing on one subject is also a valid strategy at times.*
- e) *Curriculum promotes the development of knowledge and understanding, processes and skills, as well as the dispositions to use and apply skills and to go on learning.*
- f) *Curriculum content has intellectual integrity, reflecting the key concepts and tools of inquiry of recognized disciplines in ways that are accessible and achievable for young children, ages 3 through 8 (e.g. Bredekamp & Rosegrant 1992, 1995). Children directly participate in study of the disciplines, for instance by conducting scientific experiments, writing, performing, solving mathematical problems, collecting and analyzing data, collecting oral history, and performing other roles of experts in the disciplines.*
- g) *Curriculum provides opportunities to support children's home culture and language while also developing all children's abilities to participate in a shared culture of the program and the community.*
- h) *Curriculum goals are realistic and attainable for most children in the designated age range which they are designed.*

The NAEYC also feels that the "preschool years are now recognized as a vitally important period of human development in its own right, not as a time to grow before 'real learning' begins in school. Preschool and kindergarten are no longer considered precursors to formal schooling. Instead, it is now well established that important development and learning occur during these years in all areas of human functioning - physical, social, emotional, and cognitive (including language, perception, reasoning, memory and other aspects of intellectual development)."

Developmentally Appropriate Practice In Early Childhood Programs, NAEYC, 1997.

"Setting The Stage" adheres to the following standards set in "Accreditation Criteria & Procedures of the National Association for the Education of Young Children" book:

Criteria for High-Quality Early Childhood Programs

A. Interactions among Teachers and Children

A-1. Teachers interact frequently with children. Teachers express respect for and affection toward children ... as well as during teacher-planned and child-initiated experiences. Teachers actively seek meaningful conversations with children.

A-2. Teachers are available and responsive to children; encourage them to share experiences, ideas, and feelings; and listen to them with attention and respect.

A-3. ...Teachers converse frequently with children, asking open-ended questions and speaking individually to children most of the time. Teachers engage individual children in conversations; describe actions, experiences, and events; listen and respond to children's comments and suggestions.

A-10. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to enhance children's learning and development throughout the day. For example: Teachers pose problems, ask questions, and make comments and suggestions that stimulate children's thinking and extend their learning. Teachers extend the range of children's interest by exposing them to new experiences, acquisition of specific skills as needed, being careful to challenge but not frustrate an individual child.

B. Curriculum

B-1. The program has a written statement of its philosophy and goals for children, which is available to all staff and families.

B-2. The program has written curriculum plans based on knowledge of child development and learning, and assessment of individual needs and interests. The learning environment and activities for children reflects the program's philosophy and goals.

B-3a. Teachers have clearly defined goals for individual children that guide curriculum planning...

B-4. The daily schedule provides a balance of activities in considerations of the child's total daily experience with attention to the following dimensions of scheduling:

- All age groups play outdoors daily.*
- The schedule provides for alternating periods of quiet and active play.*

- A balance of large muscle and small muscle activity is provided.
- More than one option for group activity is available to children most of the day.
- A balance of child-initiated and teacher-initiated activity is provided.

B-5. Developmentally appropriate materials and equipment are available to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergartners and school-age children.... Teachers provide books, dolls, toys, dress-up props, photos, pictures, and music that reflect the lives of the children and families served in the classroom as well as images that accurately reflect the diversity of society.

B-7. Teachers provide a variety of developmentally appropriate activities, experiences, and materials that are selected to engage children in active, meaningful learning and to achieve the following goals:

- Foster positive self-identity and a sense of emotional well-being
- Develop social skills and knowledge
- Encourage children to think, reason, question, and experiment (as used in mathematics, science and social studies)
- Encourage language (speaking, listening) and literacy development (emergent reading, writing awareness and skills)
- Enhance physical development and skills
- Encourage and demonstrate sound health, safety, and nutritional practices
- Encourage creative expression, representation and appreciation for the arts
- Respect cultural diversity

B-8. Teachers provide materials and time for children to select their own activities during the day. Children may choose from among several activities that the teacher has planned or the children initiate...

B-10. Teachers are flexible enough to change planned or routine activities according to the needs or interests of the children, and/or to cope with changes in weather or other situations that affect routines without unduly alarming the children.

B-11. Routine tasks are incorporated into the program as a means of furthering children's learning, self-help, and social skills...

G. Physical Environment

G-3. The space for children (3 years and older) is arranged to facilitate a variety of small group and/or individual activities including block building, sociodramatic play, art, music, science, math, manipulatives, and quiet book reading and writing...

This criterion refers to activities rather than areas of the room. For example, science and math are activities; they are not limited to parts of the room although the room should be arranged so that they do occur...

G-4. Age-appropriate materials and equipment of sufficient quantity, variety, and durability are readily accessible to children and arranged on low, open shelves to promote independent use by children. Materials are rotated and adapted to maintain children's interest.

Taken from: Accreditation Criteria & Procedures of the National Association for the Education of Young Children 1998 Edition