



OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY

People involved, roles played

THE CHILD AS LEARNER

Young children learn best through activities that are relevant to their lives and varied enough to be challenging and engaging. Children develop their knowledge by building on their past experiences and the learning they have already acquired. Since most children believe that learning is a pleasurable experience, they are naturally inclined and even eager to learn when they first come to school. Each child grows and develops in various interrelated areas – physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic. In order to address the full range of each child’s developmental needs, our school program should provide opportunities for learning, self-expression, and self discovery in a variety of areas – for example, in music, drama, games, language activities, and cooperative activities with peers. Children develop at different rates and in different ways. Each child is unique and has individual needs. Some children will benefit more from one type of teaching strategy than another; some may need more time than others, and/or additional resources, to achieve the learning expectations. In addition, the diverse cultural and linguistic realities of the children contribute to variations in the ways in which they develop and demonstrate their learning. Children therefore need opportunities to learn in an appropriate manner and at an appropriate time in their development, and need to be given learning experiences that are within the range of things they can do with and without guidance (in their “zone of proximal development”).

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

Our teachers perform a complex and multidimensional role. They are responsible for implementing a curriculum that is thoughtfully planned,



challenging, engaging, integrated, developmentally appropriate, and culturally and linguistically responsive, and that promotes positive outcomes for all children. A developmentally appropriate curriculum is challenging, but has expectations that are attainable for most children. The program should be flexible enough to respond to individual differences and should be consistent with children's ways of thinking and learning.

Teachers should use reflective practice, planned observation, and a range of assessment strategies to identify the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children in order to provide instruction that is appropriate for each child ("differentiated instruction"). Teachers should plan whole-class instruction, small-group learning and independent learning. There should also be a balance between teacher-initiated and child-initiated activities – times when the teacher guides the children's learning and times when children are given opportunities to choose activities to demonstrate their knowledge. Learning experiences should promote integrated learning and allow children to handle, explore, and experiment with a variety of materials that are familiar to them or that they can connect to everyday life. Teachers should also use their knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which the children live to develop and provide learning experiences that are meaningful, relevant, and respectful. Consultations with parents, caregivers, resource teachers, teacher assistants, and children themselves are an important part of the complex process of program planning. Teachers should work with these partners to gather and share information on the strengths, needs, interests, abilities, and learning styles of the children in the class, so that they can better select materials and resources and can plan and organize appropriate learning experiences. In their relations with families, teachers can play an important role in facilitating the significant transition that children face between their home and the school environment. Ongoing communication between families and teachers results in a smoother transition for children, and is a key strategy in building bridges between home and school. Teachers also need to be culturally aware, and should encourage parents to become involved in school life and to take an active part in their child's education.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Children perform better in school if their parents are involved in their education. Parents can do many things to support and be involved in their child's learning – for example, they can provide encouragement and express interest in their child's education. Parents can expect that teachers will be culturally aware and sensitive to the school-community relationship and that teachers will support parental involvement in school life. Knowledge of their child and awareness of the teacher's observations will also help parents to interpret the assessment of their child's learning and to work with the teacher



to improve and facilitate their child's progress. Participating in monthly teacher/parents meetings, talking with their child about life at school, and reading with their child are some of the many ways in which parents can take an active part in their child's education.

THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS

The principal works in partnership with teachers and parents to ensure that each child has access to the best possible educational experiences. To support children's learning, principals should ensure that the school curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate practices, and that it reflects research-based, pedagogically sound practices that support all children through the use of appropriate instructional approaches and resources.

Principals also play an important role in building professional learning communities that promote collaboration, reflection, and growth, and that enhance teaching and learning in all areas of the school program. Because developing partnerships with parents is very important, the principal should ensure that open lines of communication exist between the school and parents. Ongoing communication with all educational partners will help to encourage active and positive participation so that children become successful learners.

