

Lexington Baptist Church Child Development Ministry Curriculum and Teaching Philosophy

by Betty Bullard, Child Development Ministry Director
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The Child Development Ministry of LBC has adopted the WEE LEARN curriculum as a guide for incorporating Biblical principles within a developmentally appropriate framework. It is organized in a thematic approach. The children will have many hands-on experiences as they learn in their centers (books, blocks, home living, manipulatives, puzzles, writing, science and art). They will make crafts and do process oriented art. They will enjoy wonderful literature and music, play outside each day and hear favorite Bible stories taught by loving, Christian teachers who will be role models and encouragers in developing an appreciation of God's world and each other.

The basic principles that we will follow are outlined in *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* by Sue Bredekamp and are guidelines for all NAEYC centers. It is our goal to be the best for the children entrusted to our care. The basic principle of the studies on how children learn leads to the importance of the developmentally appropriate practices. It is obvious and important to remember that children are not small adults. They have their own ways of learning and relating to their world. Most importantly, they learn in very concrete ways. For this reason, their classrooms should be very hands-on.

An example of that would be the way that letters are taught. A child will learn a letter much quicker if he has ways to connect with in a tactile, hands-on way. To the casual observer, this may look like play, but "play is a child's work." When a child has to jump over a large cut-out letter at the door to his room, rub his fingers over the letter cut out of sand paper, make the letter in the air, make the letter in sand, eat a smack that starts with the letter or in the shape of the letter, sing a song and do a dance about the letter, learn a finger play about the letter, etc. he will learn that letter far quicker than if he must sit down at a table and write the letter on a piece of paper with no way to relate it to his real world. His brain must learn all these things in the concrete, before it can learn the abstract. This is not to say that a child can never learn a letter if he is made to just sit down and abstractly write it, but is not appropriate to where he is developmentally. It does not benefit him and is not in his best interest.

"It is possible to drill children until they can correctly recite pieces of information such as the alphabet or the numbers from one to twenty. However, children's responses to rote tasks do not reflect real understanding of the information. For children to understand fully and remember what they have learned, whether it is related to reading, mathematics, or other subject matter areas the information must be meaningful to the child in context of the child's experience and development." *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs.*

A child does not truly learn about numbers by writing 1,2,3, or counting without meaning. Again, he must learn what he learns well in a very hands-on way. By having centers that have things to touch and count, items to sort by color or size or shape or use, etc., he will learn mathematical concepts, one-to-one correspondence, as well as rote counting.

The child's room should be print immersed. The room should be labeled. The child will get accustomed to seeing the fact that these symbols called letters have real representation to items in their world. The child should be read to in large group and at other times. The teacher should move her hand in left to right movements teaching the child that print goes left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page.

Children can practice their writing skills in the writing center, with pencils, markers, note pads, papers, and more. They can "write" lists when the home living center turns into a restaurant or a grocery store.

Free art is also a very important center in all quality programs. Scissors, markers, fabric, wallpaper, paper, magazines, bottle tops --the ideas are endless-- for children to have items available to enable them to think for themselves, make decisions and be creative. Art is always a process rather than product. Because adults enjoy crafts that are a recognizable representation of something, we will still have crafts, but children's minds are broadened and their thought patterns better developed when they must think for themselves and choose and represent thoughts in ways that make sense to them. It is amazing what they can come up with when they have the freedom to choose.

Socialization is so important in preschool. From learning to separate from mom, learning to have trust in a teacher, becoming comfortable with conversing with a new friend, establishing "rules" of games and order with others, sharing, listening when another speaks, listening when the teacher speaks, following two and three step requests, moving around the room with confidence, giving answers to teachers and friends that are complete thoughts and complete sentences, sharing show-and tell in complete sentences and more, will all contribute to a child's maturity and social and emotional growth. It will never again be so appropriate to learn these skills. If they are missed here because there is little relational time, the child may know "academic" skills, but be at a deficit in these other very important areas. But, it is not a choice of one or the other- only a matter of how they are presented. These are the building blocks of being a social being fitting well into the society and family in which God has placed them.

Hopefully, this has helped you get a vision for our preschool. Close your eyes and see class after class of children engaged in activities that are enjoyable times of learning and developing as God intended all children to do.