



Cornerstone Educational Preschool

CURRICULUM

©2008
Cornerstone Educational Preschool
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Vision

Cornerstone Educational Preschool's vision is to reach out to children through validating learning styles, so that individuals feel empowered to make a difference by understanding their inner gifts. Cornerstone Educational Preschool's vision is to build bridges between inner realities with the outer world.

Mission

Cornerstone Educational Preschool's mission is its bottom line; finding real answers for real concerns to ensure the development of the child. Cornerstone Educational Preschool is a non-profit independent contractor with a mission of building curriculum around the child, rather than placing a child in a curriculum. The key to this alternative learning approach is to focus on meeting areas of learning through the child's strengths.

Curriculum Introduction

Cornerstone Educational Preschool's (Cornerstone) curriculum was pro-actively established to address the needs of children diagnosed under the Autism Spectrum. The specialized Bridging Realities Bilaterally (BRB) curriculum speaks to communication, social interaction, and creative or imaginative play. There are many factors that influence a child under the diagnosis of Autism. After working many years in the field of autism, Dr. Jennifer Dustow and her team have learned first hand what is required in order to achieve positive, long lasting results.

For example, the issue of transitioning must be a focal point of the learning process. The concept of transition cannot be solely based on teaching "how to" which is founded in personal development theories. Dr. Jennifer Dustow and her team have learned that children need to know just like adults that transitions have purpose/meaning and that the act of transition is a movement that is beneficial to human existence. Therefore, our scientific research-based "Bridging Realities Bilaterally" curriculum combines the learning community concept, sensory, and the academic needs of a visual learner which will support and promote elementary school readiness. Cornerstone's Bridging Realities Bilaterally curriculum therefore pairs knowledge to learning styles.

Combining concepts to personal learning styles is not new. In fact, a well-known professor with Harvard's Graduate School of Education, Howard Gardner believes that there are many ways humans being process intelligence. According to Gardner's belief there are eight different types of intelligences. These are:

1. Verbal/Linguistic Intelligences (have the ability to use language for effective communication in the form of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and making connections),

2. Musical/Rhythmic Intelligences (are students that like to sing, hum, listen to music, and/or play instruments because their type of intelligences processes through rhythm, melody, and music),
3. Logical/Mathematical Intelligences (have the ability for inductive and deductive reasoning, understanding and applying abstract concepts, and are strong critical thinkers),
4. Visual/Spatial Intelligences (processing tends to focus on the visual arts or the use of objects in their learning because of the student's acute perception of form, shape, depth, color, and texture),
5. Body/Kinesthetic Intelligences (learns through touching, physical movement, manipulating concrete objects, and interacting with their environment),
6. Interpersonal Intelligence (are strong communicators, their interaction are the foundation to positive personal relationships making them leaders),
7. Intrapersonal Intelligence (are students that are strong willed because they are in tune with their emotions, thought processes, attitudes, and reactions, and take responsibility for their learning),
8. Naturalist Intelligence (are observers who appreciate and discern differences among living things, and have a keen interest in the laws and forms of nature).

Cornerstone Educational Preschool takes an eclectic approach to teaching. As a team, reaching the student's uniqueness from a standpoint of building on strengths is our forefront responsibility as educators. Bridging Realities Bilaterally (BRB) curriculum uses many of the current conventional communicational approaches that are woven together with bilateral movements. Therefore, this journey is a partnership with the parents/caregivers and us as the trusted guide with their child's highest good as the final destination. In fact, this partnership becomes the agreement of the highest concern for all parties. Like any journey which is ever evolving so is our curriculum. As we evolve as educators this curriculum too will evolve.

Chapter 1

Cornerstone Educational Preschool's Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum

Objective & Competencies:

Meeting the student where he or she is developmentally is essential to understanding how the student thinks, learns, and interacts with his/her environment. This is done by observing the student's interests, abilities and developmental progress (on-going evaluations). Our responsibility is to reach the learner and challenge through appropriate learning. Achievable goals are the outcome of intentional, planned curriculum that is modified individually for each student. Therefore, Cornerstone Educational Preschool's curriculum purposefully speaks to more than one learning component at a time. This integration of learning objectives and subject matters is based on what is meaningful to the student.

Developmentally appropriate curriculum includes:

Active, Engaged and Meaningful Play Includes:

1. Classroom Structured Learning Centers promote individual and group creative development. For example, Classroom Centers would include areas such as: library, blocks, puzzles, home center, manipulates, dress-up, etc.
2. Learning Communities of no more than 5 students. These Specialized Learning Communities include and focus on developing:
 - a. Emotional-social that is closely tied to academic learning such as basic literacy, mathematics, science, technology, creative expression, health and safety, and social studies,
 - b. Physical learning that incorporates gross and fine motor muscle development,
 - c. Language advancement that is culturally sensitive and diverse, and
 - d. Creative Development that includes art, music, creative movement and drama.
3. Playground Interaction and Exposure with Typically Developing Students.

Developmentally Appropriate Preschool Program Includes:

1. Identified and framed individualized goals that are both challenging and achievable. These goals are determined through an initial formal assessment and direct feedback from the parents who are the primary caregivers. By designing an individual program that supports the “whole student” learning experiences are fostered. To ensure optimal learning experiences on-going evaluations occur in order to provide information regarding progress. This source of data collected supports decisions concerning the student’s readiness to advance.
2. Teaching strategies emphasizing learning through the process of play. This is accomplished by building the scaffolding of structure to create opportunities for cognitive and language development, self-regulation, and social competences. By providing active exploration play learning through the 5 senses, the student experiences and processes “the world as a whole.”

Consistent Routine and/or Daily Schedule

1. Children learn from adult modeling. Modeling is based in constructive ways to organize one’s day. Therefore, schedules provide the student with maximum opportunities for the acquisition of desired outcomes. Thus the variable becomes the “information” rather than the “vehicle” the learning occurs in.

Consistent Routine Includes: The daily schedules along with regularly monthly field trips are designed for generalization experiences with the expected outcome of transitioning the student through structured exposure.

2. Daily Schedule Includes: drop off, large group morning circle, snack, free center selection, small group controlled learning activity, recess, large group structured learning activities, recess, lunch, recess, nap, afternoon snack, small group planned activity, free center selection, and parent pick-up.

Transition

1. Transition is another word for change, whether that is anticipated change or an unexpected opportunity. The initial excitement and panic of separating from a known expectation to an unknown emphasizes the shifting of the student's interpersonal relationships. In either case the student is taught to respond and become accustomed to contextual factors in shaping the aspect of *feeling safe* in their learning environment through on-going positive exposure. When a student masters the transition concept he or she becomes resourceful in handling problems and conflicts because the child is able to problem-solve and adapt to change.
2. Change is incorporated as a major component and focus within all aspects of the curriculum. A student grows to learn and expect rather than avoided transitions within his or her established learning community environment through supported repetition.

Family Involvement

1. Monthly Parent Training is Mandatory. The student's parents must remain the most important aspect of the student's life. Empowered families discover opportunities to remain responsible and committed to a common reality with their child. As guides we are responsible for just that – showing the way. The families are the ones to make the prescribed advancements. Therefore, parent monthly trainings must be attended - otherwise their child cannot remain within the preschool program.
Examples of possible subjects covered in Parent Training include:

Reinforcements

Positive and Negative Reinforcers
Identifying and Developing Reinforcers
Categorizing Reinforcers
Reinforcement Schedules
Rules of Reinforcement

Disruptive Behaviors

When Negative Behaviors Occur

- *What are they?*
- *How they are harmful to the student*

Creating the Optimal Environment

- *Setting*
- *Schedules/Routines*
- *Reinforces*

Environment and Stress

Understanding Disruptive Behaviors

Guidelines for Dealing with Disruptive Behaviors

Escalation Cycle

Beginning Stages

Second Stage

Third Stage

Final Stage

All Stages

Specific Behavior Management Techniques

Behavior Programs

Disruptive Behaviors

Frustration and Tolerance Programs

Stress Hierarchy

Non-Compliance

Pointers to Facilitate Compliance

Compliance Program

Self-Stimulatory Behaviors

Functions of Self Simulations

Reactive Procedures

- *Systematic Ignoring*
- *Reinforcement*
- *Response Prevention*
- *Reducing the Reinforcing Value of Self-Stimulation*
- *Stimulus Control*

Toilet Training

Readiness

Equipment

Schedule Training

Independent Toileting*

Dry Pants Checks

Intensive Independent Toilet Training

Prompts*

Reinforcers*

Bowl Movement Difficulties
Diaper Rituals
Night-Time Toileting

Eating Problems

Food Selection
Selecting the Teaching Time
Introducing a New Food
Other Eating Problems

Play and Social Skills

Facilitation of Language
Incidental Learning
Social Reinforcement
Resistance to Teaching Social and Play Skills
Solitary Play
Teaching Play
Components of Effective Teaching
Task Analysis
Teaching One Step at a Time Until Mastery
Concentrated Teaching
Prompting and Prompt Fading
Reinforcement
Developing Independence

Social Play

Examples of Social Play/Play Activities
Setting Up Play Dates
Peer Selection
Stages of Social Development

Sense of Community

1. Community involvement, such as field trips, transmits cultural values shared by a society. By experiencing positive opportunities within the community a student learns and receives a sense of acceptance and connection.
2. Inviting community members to participate and/or present at the preschool enriches the student's learning, parents' involvement, and the community member's knowledge base.
3. Providing and linking families with resources and outside specialized support services, ensures and eliminates possible feelings of isolation. Encouraging the family and their child to connect with their community is essential. It is the most basic foundational interlocking component of relationship building. A

relationship is built between the student and his or her community, the community that the child will become an active member of one day.

Learning Communities/Areas

1. Social intelligence is based on accustomed predominate expected behaviors that are culturally rooted. By having a student in a small community of no more than five other students, the child is submerged and supported in active hands-on circumstances that are found in all relationship building.
2. By offering on-going opportunities of practice, the student acquires hands-on supported social skills in academic settings. A student must feel a solid mastery and a sense of success before he or she is able to stretch to the next skill and/or concept. Gaining understanding creates acceptance, which in turn interlocks their personal tapestry between their world and ours.

Ongoing Evaluations/Assessments

1. For evaluations to be reliable they must be accurate, consistent, and on-going. Therefore, a student's progress must be measured in relationship to his or her own obtainable goals, which are divided into steps to achieve age appropriate outcomes.
2. These evaluations are individualized standards with learning expectations. Formal semi-annual evaluations are submitted in a timely manner and in the Cornerstone Educational Preschool's documentation format. (See Assessment Forms)
3. Binders on each student's progress are stored in the student's classroom with their teacher. These binders include:
Performance Assessments – Bi-weekly documentation of a task performed within the duration of the student's attended school day. These tasks may include a printing, drawing, painting, and/or a creation.
Authentic Assessment – Bi-weekly documentation of the student's ability to apply knowledge and skills to a task that is meaningful to them. This includes tasks such as being the helper of the day, sharing, and/or a spontaneous opportunity that shows evidence of the student's learning development.
4. The confidential educational file kept on all students can be accessed by the parents upon written request with the preschool director. No documentation can be removed from a student's file.

Chapter 2

Cornerstone Educational Preschool's *BRB Curriculum*

Objective & Competencies:

Caring and control are necessary components and ingredients for teaching self-monitoring and self-managing. Teachers combine caring with clear structured expectations of a cost and outcomes approach which in turn provides a cooperative learning environment. Preparing the student's *processing* foundation for real life and elementary school experiences ensures the student's success. By knowing, understanding, and having the practical tools and techniques the student increases his or her internal focus of control. So rather than acting out, the student will be able to identify and express their feelings.

Lateral/Bilateral Exercises

1. Resolute-based published researches emphasizing his or her physical activities are conducted daily during circle time, small group and large group activities. These sensory integrated movements stimulate left and right brain communication, creating a focused *whole* learning experience for the student.
2. When students approach learning with their left and right brain stimulated, learning retention increases. As retention increases, new behavioral patterns increase creating desired outcomes that can be built upon. (See Exercises)

Purpose and Importance of Parent Training

1. As mentioned earlier the student's family is comprised of his or her primary caregivers. Working collaboratively provides the student with optimal learning experiences. By involving the student's primary caregivers, the caregivers are able to understand expectations and support accomplishments because they are aware of the student's program goals.
2. Therefore, school based daily communication with the student's parents provides carry-over from the school to home and vice versa. This daily communication is achieved either through a communication journal or verbally.
3. Consistency from home to the school and vice versa supports an outcome of stability for the student. Consistency is the foundation for students to develop trust in their environment.

Therapy Format

1. Student-centered learning is individualized and based on evaluations/assessments prior to enrollment and is on-going throughout their attendance with the preschool.
2. Before development or changes to the preschool's specialized student-focused curriculum occurs, on-going medical clearances are required so that any/all possible medical issues are eliminated.
3. Curriculum modules are setup to be modified to facilitate adaption of instruction for areas such as: physical development (fine and gross motor skills), language development (enunciating, expressing emotions/feelings, and/or non-verbal etc.), cognitive development (literacy, math, science, technology, and social studies, etc.), sensory-motor development (ability to remain seated, focused, and/or remain with group, etc.) and building relationships (friendships, family, and/or adults, etc.).

Teaching Format

1. Curriculum is divided into 12 modules, one new module for each month of a calendar year. These modules are modified as needed for each student. This modification is needs driven by the student. Therefore, the student's teacher has freedom to develop the module. However, any and all modifications to the modules remain subject to the preschool director's final decision.
2. Curriculum modules are:

January Module – Weather

February Module – Self

March Module – Seasons

April Module – New Beginnings

May Module – Space / Planets

June Module – Transportation

July Module – Summer Fun

August Module – Animals

September Module – Bugs

October Module – Thankful For

November Module – Our Community

December Module - Sharing

3. Components included within the modules of the Cornerstone Educational Preschool's curriculum have five focuses.

The first focus is Physical Development, which includes:

- a. Health skills and awareness – being able to and knowing when to wash hands, feed oneself, use the toilet, cover mouth when

sneezing or coughing, demonstrate “*good foods*” awareness, understand need for exercise and be able to physically challenge oneself.

- b. Basic safety skills and rules – be able to give their name, address, and phone number. Know what to do in an emergency situation (911 protocol, stop drop & roll fire safety, evacuation, field trip safety, etc.), travel safety (seat belts, crossing the street with an adult, etc.), and recognizing everyday danger situations (hot stove, knives, medicines, animals, etc.).
- c. Self-help routines – following a routine for self caring in areas such as dressing oneself, using the washroom independently, eating with utensils, cleaning-up after self, and caring for personal items (putting shoes away, school supplies, etc.).
- d. Fine motor strength – increasing strength in small muscles skills such as cutting, gluing, printing/drawing, eye coordination activities (puzzles, stringing, tracing, manipulative, etc.)
- e. Gross motor development – controlling and increasing strength in full body movement situations; balancing, jumping, landing on one/two feet, throwing, catching, climbing, kicking, running, galloping, skipping, creative movement, etc.

The second focus is Social Development, which includes:

- a. The student’s understanding, awareness, and expression of feelings in an appropriate manner occur through the verbal expression of inner emotions. Through this verbal expression of frustration, disappointment, excitement, and/or sadness the student demonstrates self-control, because the student is taught to recognize and describe his or her emotions.
- b. Having a positive and realistic self-concept of current strengths, personal characteristics, and likes/dislikes. Developing a sense of self includes the ability to verbally express: name, gender, age, physical traits, family roles, etc.
- c. Create relationships with peers and adults, such as making friends, dealing with feedback, working within a big or small group, etc. Relationship building includes playing cooperatively with peers with simple negotiating skills such as taking turns/sharing.
- d. Attitude and habits that facilitate learning such as nature curiosity, following a schedule, completing assigned activities, etc. enable the student to select familiar as well as new activities/tasks willingly. The student is also able to persist in solving a problem, and knowing when to seek help.

- e. Listening and speaking skills, transitioning from one activity to another, building on acquired behaviors and skills, etc. enables the student to follow rules by remaining seated during circle time, complying on the playground, and cleaning-up.

The third focus is Communication, which includes:

- a. Comprehension and unitization of the spoken language. Spoken language is necessary for relating experiences, expressing thoughts/feelings/opinions, being able to ask questions, follow everyday conversation whether they are based in the here and now, or other places in the past, etc.
- b. Language acquisition - acquiring appropriate vocabulary. Using nouns, verbs, and descriptive phrases to structure sentences from simple to complex, etc.
- c. Enjoying and demonstrating interest in books. Pretending to read, knowing how a book is read (read front to back, from top to bottom, left to right, etc.), participating in story time (including chiming in when stories are continually reread), showing awareness of literature (plot, story, character, language, etc), and generalizing identification of symbols, etc.
- d. Demonstrating interest in printing. Scribble, draw, color, and pretending to print shows understanding of the concepts of letters. Associating letters with their sounds, and discriminate rhyming sounds, etc.

The fourth focus is Cognitive Development, which includes:

- a. Symbolic Play is the primary medium for students to make sense of their experiences, which helps them construct concepts regarding their world. Through pretend play the student engages in fantasy and real-life experiences.
- b. Mathematics structures the student's experiences in the form of quantitative, logical, and spatial relationships between things, people, and events. Recognizing and creating patterns, knowledge regarding numbers, numerical representation, and basic numerical operations (such as counting, adding and subtracting, concept development in shapes, function, space, and measurement concept) all support the student's foundation for success in school.
- c. Science education builds on the student's natural sense of wonder and curiosity (exploring of objects and materials), sensory awareness (using water, sand, paint, etc.), exploring physical properties and characteristics of living things, and learning about our universe incorporates the use of technology.
- d. Social Studies teaching about relationships. The student learns about themselves and others (similarities and differences - psychology), appreciating cultures (participate in rituals and traditions - cultural anthropology), becoming aware of changes

(talking about what happened yesterday - history), learn how people are interrelated (participate in creating, following rules, and decision making, while recognizing authority, - economics, sociology, and political science), and how to protect our earth (participate in efforts such as recycling - ecology).

The fifth and final focus is Creative Development, which includes:

- a. Art – creating and expressing the student’s sense of self, while learning about elements and techniques. This form of expression uses media (paint, glue, pencils, clay, etc.) to represent the student’s thoughts and ideas towards topics being studied (such as a drawing a picture of something they saw/felt during a field trip).
- b. Music – includes singing songs, listening to music, musical games, and using musical instruments to express emotions. The student is able to demonstrate awareness of musical elements such as tempo, rhythm, pitch, and dynamics (such as clapping hands, etc.).
- c. Creative Movement and Drama – the student participates in guided movement (for example acting out a story) with or without the use of props (such as wearing dress-up clothing, etc.), and moving with different levels of force (stomping, tip toeing, etc.).
- d. Aesthetic Appreciation – being able to reflect upon the student’s own creative work along with the works of others through description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment.

References

Dustow, J. (2007). Bilateral exercises decrease “off task” behavior in special needs preschoolers on the Island of Oahu, Hawaii; *Brain Gym Journal*. 21(1), 4, 10-11

Dustow, J. Dr., (2007), Do bilateral exercises that cross the midline decrease off task behavior with special needs preschoolers with a diagnoses under the autism spectrum within a classroom environment on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, Argosy University, Honolulu, HI

Eikeseth, S., Jahr, E., & Eldevik, S. (1999). Intensive school-based behavioral treatment for four to seven year old children with autism: a one year follow-up. *Paper presented at the PEACH June conference*, London, UK.

Erwin, D. (1991). Assessing students learning and development. San Francisco, CA; Jossey-Bass.

Gestwicki, C. (1999). Developmentally appropriate practice, curriculum, and development in early education. Clifton Park, NY; Thomson Delmar Learning.

Hatch-Rasmussen, C. (1995). Sensory integration. Torrance, CA; Sensory Integration International.

Ida, P., 2004, Hawaii preschool content standards, Honolulu, HI

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 2005, a guide to the NAEYU early childhood program standard and related accreditation criteria, Washington, DC. Self published.