

CCC

Curriculum Overview

“You can’t say you can’t play” ~ Vivian Paley

Community Children’s Center

797 Mansfield City Road, Storrs, CT 06268

communitychildrenscenter.org

comm.childrens.ctr@snet.net

860.456.7171

Curriculum Overview

First Things First

At CCC our goal is to provide quality care and education for young children. Our curriculum is progressive in that we recognize that young children at play are laying down the durable foundation on which to build all later emotional, physical, and cognitive knowledge and development.

Thus, CCC gives children a lovingly guided, stable environment rich in basic materials, time, and thoughtful support, and children bring themselves to us; their abilities and challenges, thoughts, feelings and wishes. Through their play, in partnership with their peers and teachers, children build increasingly sophisticated understandings of themselves and the world around them.

Areas of Development

On the surface young children's play is global and concrete in nature. Delving deeper allows a view of how each individual is hard at work constructing knowledge across all areas of development. What follows is an overview of the way in which we chose to divide areas of development (individual, social, physical, language and cognitive development) and the growth we seek in each of the areas.

Individual Development

We foster Children's continuing development of a strong sense of self:

- being: a sense of who they are, and security in being themselves within the setting
- feeling: clarity about, acceptance of, and responsiveness to their own emotions
- thinking: the desire and ability to notice, take in, and formulate ideas and fantasies
- doing: the desire and ability to be active and restful within the setting
- making: the desire and ability to shape and affect their surroundings

Social Development

We support children's ability to connect with others, as they grow in:

- a sense of self as closely connected to, and also separate from, home and family
- comfort with familiar/ caution about unfamiliar/ curiosity about surroundings
- comfort with familiar/ caution about unfamiliar/ curiosity about people
- ability to form relationships with adults and children outside the family
- a sense of own identity within the group
- a sense of belonging with and connection to the center's family of teachers and children
- ability to play near and with other children
- the development of empathy, problem-solving and negotiation skills

Language and Literacy

We support children's desire and ability to communicate their own thoughts, feelings, needs and desires, as well as children's increasing ability to listen and respond to the communication of others. Aspects of development include:

- interest in listening to and using language
- sensitivity to and playfulness with words: rhymes, chants, invented words
- increasing ability to express self and a sense of safety and security about doing so
- use of language to negotiate and to develop ideas
- openness to the pleasure and power of written words: printed materials and child's dictation
- awareness of print that develops according to children's individual interest.

Math and Science

CCC supports children's awareness of and responsiveness to physical qualities of their surroundings: their ability and desire to observe and to create order through describing, defining, measuring, and comparing, their surroundings. Aspects of development include:

- interest in the indoor environment and objects within it

- interest in the outdoor and natural environment and objects
- exploring size, shape, quantity, weight, color, texture, pattern, transformability, through touch and observation
- using language to describe these characteristics
- counting, comparing, matching, sorting and using language to describe these activities
- observing, and using language to describe, changes such as, mixing during cooking, the life cycle of a butterfly

Art and Music

CCC supports children's aesthetic awareness of and responsiveness to the sights and sounds of their surroundings, and their desire to make their own visual and auditory mark on the world through the use of a wide range of materials. Aspects of development include:

- noticing and responding to beautiful, interesting, or disturbing sights and sounds in the surroundings
- enjoyment of and developing ability to use art materials, such as drawing implements, paint, scissors, glue, modeling and construction materials
- enjoyment of singing, rhythm instruments, and movement
- awareness of qualities of sound, music and movement
- experiences of working with others to make art and music: sharing qualities of and responses to materials

Physical Development

CCC supports children's awareness of and responsiveness to their physical self, and development of children's awareness of those around them. Aspects of development include:

- development of large muscle strength, coordination and control
- development of increasing number of ways to use body
- development of small muscle strength, coordination and control
- development of increasing number of ways to use hands
- awareness of stability/ instability, motion/ stillness
- awareness of own body space in relation to surroundings and other's space, and ability to control physical self in response to this awareness
- ability to respond to various individual and social contexts by moving, changing direction or stopping

Opportunities for Development Embedded Within the Materials

The following pages introduce each of the basic materials (sand and water, blocks, art, role play, and pretend play with objects) and activities (language and literacy, group time, and music and movement). A brief description of play with each material describes how young toddlers tend to approach the materials, and older preschoolers who have had much experience with the material during their years at CCC. Of course, development varies widely among children, and for each child there is variation from material to material depending on the child's experience with each. A child who comes to CCC as a preschooler, but without previous experience of painting, will, at first, paint very much as a toddler would. Another child, who doesn't like to use blocks, might have difficulty building a simple, stable structure, but at the same time be able to sound out a label for that building. The full breadth of each child's development is supported in each material and activity at CCC. For more specific examples of these developmental opportunities please see our full, unabridged curriculum overview below.

Sand and Water

Play with these materials takes place indoors at the sand table, water table and sink, and outdoors in sandboxes and puddles. These materials are neutral, changeable and unformed, so invite children to make their imprint on them. Their tactile qualities are soothing and relaxing (with the exception of puddles!) so that children tend to become absorbed and work for long periods of time with sand and water. The youngest toddler's exploration is purely tactile and early discovery of cause and effect. Older preschoolers who have frequently used sand and water will have built up a rich store of knowledge of the properties of these materials as well as knowledge of such variables as volume, weight, and stability. They often combine materials into elaborate structures for sand or water to flow through. They also know the materials well as pretend objects and can easily play out interests and concerns. For example: a game with families of animals in which some are repeatedly buried and recovered, as a way to work through feelings about separation from family and inclusion and exclusion in the peer group.

Individual Development

responsiveness and connectedness to changeable, natural material
involvement of all senses: soothing, satisfying
ability to change and affect materials
open-ended: child plays at own pace with wide scope for form of play

Social Development

setting for play with or near others: children must learn to balance own and others' desires
need for safe and responsible use of materials to protect self and others
wide scope for negotiation and problem-solving: awareness of own and other's desire for
space and materials
invites conversation, parallel play, shared play and social pretend play

Language and Literacy

invites conversation and negotiation during play
concrete demonstration of vocabulary such as full/empty, heavy/light
invites description and explanation of cause and effect
invites description and explanation of imaginary play

Math and Science

observation of and experimentation with qualities of materials
observation of and experimentation with cause and effect
hands on knowledge of shape, space, size, volume, weight
opportunities during play to compare, contrast, match, sort, compare parts and whole

Art and Music

Aesthetic awareness of sight, sound, and feeling of materials
enjoyment of using hands to experience the materials and create

Physical Development

Development of hand muscles
awareness and control of movements to keep materials contained, facilitate play near others
hands-on, tactile experience

Blocks

Large, hollow blocks enable children to build structures they can climb into (such as a house), smaller wooden unit blocks allow building of structures for pretend play with objects (such as a zoo for model animals), and the smallest colored blocks are usually used strength and coordination, and learning about the relationship between size and weight. They dump and refill containers of small blocks. Older preschoolers will have learned enough about properties of size, shape, weight and balance from previous block-building experience to know how to build solid tall or elaborate structures.

Individual Development

satisfaction of using muscles to work with simple, solid, natural material
sense of self as a maker through building
large scope for child to act on materials: transform through imagination
scope for formulating, carrying out and completing plan

Social Development

individual work can be shared with others
invites shared play and share pretend play
scope for discussion and negotiation of practical aspects of building and content of play
need for safe use of materials for own and others' safety
need to make space for others and define own space

Language and Literacy

invites conversation and negotiation during play
invites description and explanation of qualities of structure
use of labels and signs

Math and Science

balance and gravity
size, shape, weight, quantity, volume
measurement and equivalency
counting, comparing, contrasting
parts as fractions of whole
experimenting

Art and Music

aesthetic qualities of structure
exploration of balance, symmetry, pattern
rhythmic aspects, and need to avoid loud crashing in deference to needs of others

Physical Development

large and small muscle strength, coordination and control
need to control movements to protect own and others' structure and body
hands-on, tactile experience

Art

Basic art materials consistently available to children include drawing materials, paint, clay, collage, and construction materials. Other materials such as printmaking, finger-painting, and group mural painting are also provided. Art materials for young toddlers are about tactile, visual experiences, cause and effect, and the properties of each material.

Preschoolers will have built up an ability to control each material and to use it expressively. Their ability to create and use symbols will be developing, so that some children begin to execute narrative drawings in which all elements within the picture relate as part of an overall scene.

Individual Development

- satisfaction of making
- awareness of self through making one's mark
- creating own process, deciding when complete
- aesthetic involvement
- opportunity to communicate

Social Development

- learning non-judgmental ways to describe own work and support that of others
- sharing aesthetic experience with others
- noticing and responding to others' visual communication
- sharing and negotiating space and materials
- respect for and safe use of materials

Language and Literacy

- using language to describe activity or narrative scene
- communication through color, form, representation
- visual-motor coordination
- knowledge of relationships on 2-D surface: size, shape, quantity and quality of marks

Math/ Science

- order, balance, quantity, symmetry, comparison, size, shape, color, empty/full, wet/dry, color mixing
- cause and effect, experimenting and observing results
- working with qualities and transformability of materials
- properties and uses of tools

Art and Music

- free, open-ended, aesthetic, visual and tactile experience
- means of communication with self and others
- working with qualities of design, balance, form and space, line, texture, color
- experimenting and gaining control of qualities and possibilities of various media and tools

Physical Development

- visual-motor coordination
- small muscle strength and coordination

Role Play

Play in which the child pretends to do something or become someone else may take place either individually or with a group of children. Play ranges in complexity from a young toddler pretending to speak on the phone to a group of older preschoolers planning and executing a dramatic episode including negotiating roles and storyline, arranging the pretend environment and choosing or making appropriate props to carry out play.

Individual Development

possibilities for self, seeing how one fits into and power and control
trying out information, integrating ideas in a larger schema
playing out fears and anxieties, wishes and hopes

Social Development

playing about knowledge of family and social world
learning to play with others, and how to integrate more players into ongoing games
communicating and negotiating form of play, sharing materials
learning about and allowing for others' interests and preferences

Language and Literacy

language for negotiating, developing and carrying out play
awareness of subtleties of speech through using language appropriate to varied roles
playing at writing for various purposes: signs, notes, lists, letters...

Math/ Science

use of comparison, counting, sorting, arranging, one-to-one correspondence, sequencing etc. for play purposes (everyone getting two tickets, setting a table, stages of a life cycle)
balance, order, size, shape and weight comparison when building with big blocks
trying out ideas about time and seasons, about cause and effect
playing about families, health and nutrition, life cycles, animals, nature
experimenting with, organizing and generalizing information and ideas
planning, organizing and executing plans
awareness of properties of materials

Art/ Music

making props, pictures to embellish play
representing play experiences in pictures
singing, using instruments as part of pretending

Physical Development

use of both large and small muscle for many different purposes
awareness of own and others' space, need to control movement for safety

Pretend Play with Objects

Play in which the child brings inanimate objects to life, and directs the action. Play ranges in complexity from that of a toddler who, for a moment, pushes a block across the floor while saying “Brrm, brmm,” presumably pretending the block is a car, to older preschoolers building elaborate block structures with labels and other props, planning and negotiating play and the inclusion of other children’s characters, and perhaps leaving off and later returning to the same pretend scenario.

Individual Development

power of controlling an imaginary world
expressing, experimenting with, and integrating ideas
trying out information, integrating ideas in larger schema
playing out fears and anxieties, wishes and hopes

Social Development

playing about knowledge of family and social world
communicating and negotiating form of play, sharing of materials
learning about and allowing for others’ interests and preferences
learning to play with others, and how to integrate more players into ongoing games

Language/ Literacy

language for negotiating and developing play
building awareness of subtleties of speech through talking for various toys
playing at writing for various purposes: signs, dictated stories

Math/ Science

use of comparison, counting, sorting, arranging, one-to-one correspondence, sequencing etc. for play purposes (making a family with big, middle-sized and small, making appropriate sized enclosures for various animals)
balance, order, size, shape and weight comparison when building with small blocks and other construction toys
trying out ideas about time and seasons, and about cause and effect
playing about families, health and nutrition, life cycles, animals, nature
experimenting with, organizing and generalizing information and ideas
planning, organizing and executing plans
awareness of properties of materials

Art/ Music

making props, pictures to embellish play
representing play experiences in pictures
singing, using instruments as part of pretending

Physical Development

use of both small and large muscles for many different purposes
awareness of own and others’ space, need to control movement for safety, and to protect arrangement of toys (block and duplo structures, arrangement of animals in sand...)

Music and movement

Music and movement activities - songs, fingerplays, dancing and movement games - are included in group times throughout the day. For toddlers, simple songs and games help develop language, give a sense of familiarity, especially if these are songs the child knows from home, and through doing something together with the group, give a child a positive sense of belonging with the group. For preschoolers, these benefits continue as more complex songs and games also challenge memory. There are opportunities for responding through movement to various types of music and the movement of others.

Individual Development

means of expression
body integration, sense of self
control and use of voice

Social Development

connectedness with group, sense of group working as one: making music together and moving with others
respecting one's own and others' space
learning about and allowing for others' interests and preferences

Language/ Literacy

songs tend to be easy to memorize, so build vocabulary
picture books of songs are engaging for toddlers, help attention to and interest in books
awareness of qualities of language such as alliteration, rhyme, and repetition

Math/ Science

concrete experience of mathematical qualities of music through singing, playing rhythm instruments and dancing to music
Songs and games may have specific mathematical content: counting up, counting down, patterns
Songs and games may have specific science content such as cause and effect or information about animals

Art/ Music

aesthetic qualities of visual and musical composition such as harmony, balance, pattern, timber, pitch

Physical Development

development of facial and throat muscles involved in producing song
use of body integration, strength and coordination in directed movement (such as "Simon Says") and free dance

Language and Literacy

Language is used continually throughout the day at CCC, by both the children and teachers. Toddlers are just beginning to talk to negotiate, have needs met and to describe and carry out play, and they need lots of patience, encouragement and support. For preschoolers, these kinds of talk are indispensable and continual, and the work is to fine-tune clear communication appropriate to the situation and participants. Teachers are very thoughtful in their own communication with children, and keep in mind the goals of developing rapport with each child (making time to converse with children and talk about their play), helping children to self-regulate (drawing out the child's awareness and ideas, rather than issuing demands) and to negotiate (making neutral comments and helping children listen to one another, rather than moralizing or imposing solutions). Language is expanded and the underpinnings of literacy developed through frequent reading-aloud and singing, using materials appropriate to the children's ages. Early literacy activities for preschoolers include making group books and experience charts, individually dictated stories and availability of alphabet letters and numbers to trace or copy, as well as small booklets and forms to encourage pretend writing.

Individual Development

continued development of sense of self through speaking
development in ability to communicate clearly as desired and intended
hearing and taking in factual and emotional qualities of verbal communication

Social Development

continued development of sense of belonging and being heard through being responded to
connecting with others through communication and listening
making one's needs, desires, or ideas, known, having these acknowledged
noticing the affective power of words to soothe, anger, amuse, convince, etc.
hearing and acknowledging others' spoken communication
sharing dictated stories with group, hearing the stories of other children
structure of quiet listening and taking turns while talking during story reading and group discussions
through books: information about social world, social-emotional issues, styles of communication, awareness of other cultures and times

Language/ Literacy

enjoying spoken and written words
knowledge of forms of written word: sings, notes, lists, poems, stories, picture books, fact books, anthologies, song books
awareness of left to right progression, letters, "book language", the fact that written words can be read repeatedly and always say the same thing
dictating notes and stories makes the connection that spoken words can be written down, and written words read in spoken words

Math/ Science

developing and using language to describe, compare, categorize, count, etc.
counting books develop knowledge of number names and symbols, seriation, numbers as labels for fixed quantities
learning information from fact books, using books to look up information

Art/ Music

means of expressive communication
visual, aesthetic qualities of letters, blocks of print on page, print related to illustrations
written words interpreted through many styles of illustration
auditory and aesthetic qualities of speech sounds: loudness, sharpness, rhyme, alliteration, repetition, etc.

Physical Development

development of facial and throat muscles involved in producing speech sounds small muscle and visual-motor development through pretend and beginning writing, and through handling books gently

Group Time

Children are gathered together at regular times each day for group times, which include discussion, reading-aloud and songs, fingerplays or movement games. Toddlers are invited to join group time, and most preschoolers are expected to do so. Group times for toddlers are very short with simple, engaging songs and books, and perhaps an interesting concrete object to feel and talk about. They center on predictable, comforting routine, such as the same songs each day to introduce and end group time. Group times for preschoolers can be longer, but not too long. Group times usually include a poem or song, longer stories and simple fact books, often chosen to reflect an interest that has arisen among the children. Discussions of what form play will take and which materials the children want available, problem solving of social issues that have arisen, and children's stories of their home life are common themes for group time conversation. Often after the main portion of group time, children can choose to begin playing or to stay for one more story.

Cooking and other group projects and trips are given separate subheadings, since they contain some opportunities for development not included in the regular daily group times:

Cooking and other group project: For activities like cooking, group painting or special art activities, children are invited rather than required to join the group. Usually some children are busy with their own play, others hang back initially and eventually join in, and some start off the activity then go off to their own work.

Trips: These may be spontaneous walks in the woods near by or planned trips into the community. Toddlers must be very comfortable with the group and their teachers before feeling comfortable enough to be out in the world without their parents. Toddler trips tend to be limited in frequency and duration. Preschoolers can usually handle trips more easily, once they have adjusted to the center. Trips are still fairly infrequent, because of the complexity of arranging and scheduling supervision, but are enjoyable and growthful additions to the regular program.

Individual Development

sense of being part of a group, having a place in the group
opportunity for expressing ideas, thoughts, feelings to the group
opportunity to be active with others, or hold oneself apart, as desired
opportunity to show aspects of oneself or one's abilities to the group, such as: singing a song, having one's story read, telling a joke or about an event from home

Cooking and other group projects:

opportunity to add one's input to the group's have one's voice heard, or work seen

Trips:

gaining a sense of trust in C.C.C. adults and children
feeling able to take in new things, be with C.C.C. group in a different setting
learning from direct experience through experiencing with all senses, thinking and talking about the experience

Social Development

balance of attending to own needs and desires and being able to state these in a group setting, and attending to and respecting the needs and desires of others
learning to feel heard and to feel able to listen: managing structure of keeping still, quiet listening and taking turns talking or moving
opportunity to enjoy singing, moving, listening, discussing with others
learning about own and other cultures through books, folk tales, songs
sharing one's own oral or dictated stories

Cooking and group projects:

taking turns, keeping to own space, standing up for oneself, enjoying the satisfaction of making with others

experience of food of other families or culture

Trips:

sharing enjoyment of experience with friends: can increase connectedness of group
shared experience to discuss and role play

Language/ Literacy

opportunity to talk and listen, negotiate

awareness and experience of many types of language: songs, poems, stories, fact books

Cooking and group projects:

noticing structure of recipes, dictating recipes

invitation for descriptive language, argument and negotiation

Trips:

descriptive language and language used in role play about trips

new vocabulary

use of written word in the social world: signs, maps, brochures, etc.

dictated stories about trips, thank you notes

Math/ Science

counting songs and books, counting children in group

noticing that a larger group of children means a longer wait for each to have a turn

number constancy and seriation through games like Framer in the Dell, Ten in the Bed

one-to-one correspondence of number of children to number of classroom jobs chosen

information about time, seasons, nature, social world through books and discussion

vocabulary: before, after, next, etc.

Cooking and group projects:

experimenting: hypothesizing, measuring, comparing, noticing changes, cause and effect, effects of heat and cold, safety

Trips:

observation, direct experience, reflection, discussion

Art/ Music

Singing together, playing instruments together, movement and movement games

artwork in picture books

children's own pictures and illustrated stories

Cooking and group projects:

noticing aesthetic and tactile qualities of ingredients and materials

experience of actively creating with others

Trips:

open-ness to taking in aesthetic qualities of new sights, sounds and feelings

Physical Development

increasing body awareness, awareness of others, and self control in respecting this:

keeping still when others are trying to listen, being next to without bashing into, moving through space without crowding or bumping others

Cooking and group projects:

small muscle control in pouring, mixing, making

whole body control in crowded setting

Trips:

opportunity to use physical abilities in new settings, and to try new ways of moving

Other Materials and Experiences Integrated into the Classroom Environment

Small Manipulatives (i.e. lego, pattern blocks, etc.)

Puzzles

Games (i.e., Memory Cards, dominos, etc.)

Musical Instruments

Dollhouse or animal barn

Living animals, plants, insects (i.e., bunny, guinea pig, fish, observation jar for insects)

Large motor activities in classroom (i.e. big blocks, riding cars, ramp, and loft)

Technology

- simple tools: hammers, pulleys, levers, gears, wheels and chutes for water & sand
- high technology: CD players for music, dancing, and stories, cameras, magnifying glasses, handheld microscopes

Diversity and Similarity

- within the classroom: family and community members share songs, stories, foods or traditions that reflect many family cultures
- within the larger world: exposure to a variety of cultures through language, literature and music
- group conversation exploring differences and similarities in family styles (i.e. food conversations at lunch)

Observation, Assessment and Planning

At CCC the classroom environment is arranged to allow children to experience and explore the basic materials described within this curriculum. Children engage in play with these materials while they interact with other children and adults in the environment, and through their play they construct knowledge and expand their development individually, socially, cognitively, aesthetically, and physically. The teacher's role is to support this development through careful observation, appropriate guidance and thoughtful planning. This begins with a child's entry into our program, as family input (via information sheets, screenings, and conversations) guides what teachers initially know about each child. All families complete a developmental screening (ASQ) of their child upon registration and annually thereafter.

Teachers continually observe and assess children's needs, interests and desires. Within the framework of this curriculum, teaching practices and the environment are adapted as needed. Teachers are trained in the use of another screening tool (AEPS) when further assessment is indicated. In addition, all School Readiness teachers, and all CoTeachers, have been trained in The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) and use it as an umbrella as we plan, observe, and document each child's progress and implement teaching strategies.

Each teaching team has a weekly meeting to discuss the daily life in the classroom and address the needs of each child individually. Meetings are structured so that the specific needs of every child are considered at least once monthly, and the group is considered as a whole. Planning is a team effort that includes problem-solving, creating strategies and adapting the environment to foster individual growth and the smooth functioning of the group. Reflection and communication are important aspects of weekly team meetings.

Staff and families communicate with each other frequently through ongoing verbal communication. Other avenues of communication include email, the child log book, classroom white board postings describing the group's activities, monthly classroom board reports, and published phone office hours during which staff are available for more in-depth conversation with parents.

Teachers conduct individual conferences, called "exchanges," with the families of each child twice a year, in the late Fall and late Spring. The word exchange is used because these discussions are a sharing of information between teachers and families, including each child's interests, needs and developmental progress at home and at school. Conferences can also be arranged any other time a parent or teacher feels there is a need. Translators are available upon request.

To prepare for an exchange, teachers take into account the results of developmental screenings in conjunction with observations, meeting discussions and notes, and benchmark checklists. The structure of our narrative "exchange report" prompts them to fully consider each aspect of a child's development and provides an organized way to share that information with families. Teachers and parents discuss the child's development at CCC during the exchange, and the family's ideas and concerns and any plans of action are noted on the report at that time. A copy of the exchange report is available to parents after the exchange, and the original is kept in the child's file at CCC.

If a teacher or parent feels that a child may be in need of screening or services beyond what is offered at CCC, an exchange may be arranged to discuss these concerns and arrange for appropriate referrals. Referrals may include but are not limited to evaluation by Birth-to-Three or public school providers, or classroom observation by outside consultants (e.g., the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership). If a child is in need of services, CCC staff work with each family and service provider to implement the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Parents' concerns are kept confidential and are communicated to staff on an 'as needed' basis. This means that the information is shared only when necessary, usually with the staff members working most closely with that child. Maintaining confidentiality is an important aspect of developing trust between CCC staff and each family. All staff are trained each year in confidentiality, professional conduct and the CCC code of ethics.

The overall program at CCC is evaluated annually using a combination of NAEYC family survey and classroom observation tools, staff evaluations, and ongoing reflection at the staff and board level. In

addition, CCC's participation in the School Readiness Program mandates quarterly visits from an early childhood liaison to assure the integration of "quality components" generated by the state of Connecticut.

At CCC assessment, first and foremost, is the continual observation, discussion and reflection of our daily interactions with the children. All planning and adaptations of the environment and curriculum take place within the context of this ongoing process. Other scheduled evaluations help staff to plan program improvements and professional development and training.

This curriculum is a living document that is intended to be responsive to the entire CCC program.