

ECE in the Classroom

Redesigning Current Traditional Classrooms

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ECE in the Classroom is a plan to redesign current traditional methods of teaching with teacher instruction followed by teacher led group activities and seat work with developmentally appropriate teaching methods.

Although this paper addresses the needs of 2nd and 3rd graders, the discipline methods, teaching philosophy and concepts come from the same foundational methods used for preschool and kindergartners.

I will introduce the concepts of “learning centers”, “class meetings”, “positive discipline”, “multiple intelligences” and “ages and stages for school-aged students”, keeping in mind the realistic nature of the program, it’s goals, financial considerations and the physical makeup of the classroom and outside play area. Then, working toward a goal of including all the other elements of a quality ECE program.

With that in mind, I’m approaching this plan with an audience that has little or no understanding of Early Childhood Education (ECE) program standards, methods or theology. Therefore, I’ll attempt to use everyday language instead of ECE jargon, jumping right in with what would be the most obvious change and moving from there to the more specific details of curriculum and method.

The very first thing I would do is have an interview with the teacher and make sure she is open to the idea. Then I would make some recommendations that she check out the following web site, (<http://www.mspowell.com/centers.html>) making mention of the specific areas I mentioned above. And then, since this is a generalized action plan and more specific information needs to be learned for any educator to operate any ECE program effectively, I would highly recommend reading,

"Foundations of Early Childhood Education" by Janet Gonzalez-Mena. This book does the best job I've seen in giving the basics of ECE philosophy with very clear and specific examples. It also lists many additional resources that are available in each area. I would also recommend reading "Class Meetings" by Emily Vance and Patricia Jimenez Weaver.

Then I would talk about and define how to rearrange the classroom to set up "Centers" for learning activities. I would explain that Centers are designed to enhance the lessons with hands on activities that correlate with the specific concept that is being introduced that day or week. Children will receive some formal teacher instruction and then go to a group of predesigned areas of the class, called "Activity Centers" to work on one or more activities.

For example, if a math lesson is on learning the names and value of coins, nickels, dimes, pennies and quarters, several learning activities could be included in the "Math Center" to choose from. A bag or small purse containing a couple dollars of real money the student can match with a picture card of the coins. The picture card can have the money value printed under each picture. In another box, carton, or envelope, small items with price tags on them. The child can then list in a journal, similar to a check book journal in larger size, the item or items he can buy with the money in the purse. There are several options to expand on this activity as students increase their ability to add and subtract, multiply and divide.

Research has shown that a child gains knowledge about the world by trial and error during his play time when he is actively "working" with real people and things, rather than symbols of things on paper. Studies have shown when children are subjected to rigid, formal programs with isolated skill development and abstract concepts that stress right answers, it suppresses curiosity, critical thinking and creative expression.

It's been said that a child's "work" is play, and the brain actually responds better to this type of learning. In addition to play, children need relationships with caring adults who engage in one-on-one, face-to-face interactions with them to support their feelings of security, which is important to brain development.

Therefore, in each center I want to have manipulative games and activities for each of the different learning styles. The different learning styles people have is something called "multiple intelligences". A simple questionnaire given at the beginning of the year can help the teacher and the student identify their learning style. I've included one in the Appendix, which I think could easily be adapted for younger students to understand. Using these different types of learning styles helps children to develop quicker and easier. When a child struggles to understand a concept, the teacher will know what kind of activity can help that child with that concept.

I've listed the learning styles, "intelligences", below and given an example from the literacy center for each one so you get an idea of what kind of activity might be used for that learning style. I've also included some other center ideas in the Appendix.

- **logical-mathematical intelligence:**

This center was devised by my school district in Maryland, as well. Random items (magnet, clothespin, tiny pencil, jack from a jacks game, toy truck, etc.) are placed in a bag. Students choose a task card that requires them to use critical thinking skills as they examine and write about the objects. Cards range from tasks that ask them to sort the objects according to predetermined and self-selected categories, to speculative tasks about how a future civilization would view us if they found only this bag of objects as remains from our culture. Very imaginative and gifted students often choose this center repeatedly when they go to Thinking Smart.

- **Interpersonal intelligence**

This center is called, "In My Book...", which is a play on words alluding to both a book and the expression meaning "in my opinion". Students choose any reading material that interests them (even magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, etc.- things they may not normally read during school hours) and then reflect on what they read using the prompts you see above. The left part of the file folder explains what to write for each prompt in case students need more detailed instructions.

- **musical-rhythmic intelligence**

Students listen to the math facts being sung on tape while following along with the lyrics on paper or just closing their eyes and listening. After the song ends, they write the times table that they just heard on the tape. They repeat for as many songs as they have time for.

- **naturalist intelligence**

This center includes National Geographic magazines, Time for Kids, Scholastic News, and science-related books for kids on a rotational basis. Students read stories and then record an interesting ("weird") fact they read in the blue book. The book is simply photo copies of a page that asks children to record their names, the date, the title of the publication they read, the title of the article, the author, and what the weird fact was. I bound the pages together using a book binding machine my school has, but you could use a three-ring binder (it would probably be more durable, too). Students enjoy reading what previous classes and classmates read about.

- **verbal-linguistic intelligence**

Word Smart centers are mostly making words activities. In "Stir the Stew" students use a small ladle to scoop letter tiles out of a bowl (in this picture, I just have a baggie). They then use the worksheet to record the words they create using only the letters they scooped out. Each section of the worksheet is for a different length of word: two letter words, three letter words, etc. Students could easily just write the words in their journals so you don't have to photocopy worksheets.

- **bodily-kin esthetic intelligence**

This is a fun one. I also use a Hershey fraction book (with brown construction paper photocopies of the chocolate bar sections in the book) and Valentine candy heart multiplication/division book (with real candy hearts that students know are very old and not edible!). They are great hands-on math practice activities. For younger students, you could use the Cheerio or M&M counting and sorting books.

- **interpersonal intelligence**

The focus here is writing for a meaningful purpose. Many students only write in school, and because they have to. This is an opportunity to show them that writing can be fun and useful in their own lives, right now. They can write a letter to whoever they want, and after turning it in to me after center time, can give it to that person. They use different colored ink pens, which makes it really fun in their eyes. The left side of the folder demonstrates proper letter writing format, which I insist on towards the end of the year, although I allow casual notes in the beginning.

- **visual-spatial intelligence**

In Picture Smart, students use photos and drawings as an inspiration for their writing. They can also be given specific tasks, such as writing five verbs they see, ten adjectives for a picture they think is pretty or interesting, creating captions or headlines, a dialogue with quotation marks for two people in an ad, etc.

Ok, so I've already said the brain takes in information more efficiently when a student is joyfully playing and feeling secure, and obviously he is not joyful if the child is under stress. So, the child must feel comfortable in the room, feel safe and secure with the teacher and be able to relax enough to "work at play" without being afraid. That's why making sure the child's needs are met and building a relationship with the child has proven to be the best way for children to learn and grow.

Children have to feel important, understood and loved. That means they have to have someone pay attention to what they need and to their story and to what they are all about, their interests, feelings and wants. Teachers need to build relationships.

Acknowledging a child's work is very important to building the relationship. Acknowledgment is not about praising him for his work but noticing what he is doing. We have to be careful not to always say, "good job" because this creates a need for the child to receive outside gratification for his work instead of inside gratification. If he can't be satisfied with his own efforts without an adult telling him he's doing a good job, it will affect his ability to work independently and be self-motivated to accomplish a task. When we acknowledge the process he's involved in, he's more likely to feel what he is doing is more important than what he produces. Ironically, the finished product will be better when we do this.

There is a balance to acknowledging a child's work and interrupting the flow of his interest or attention to it. It takes practice to find that balance and to think before making comments. Some comments might be:

"I can see that you worked hard to color in the lines."

"I notice that you took your time to make those letters."

"I see you found the marble rolls faster than the car."

"Those shapes made a square."

Traditional classrooms tend to forget about the process and focus on meeting the goals of the Office of Public Instruction with rules, routines and performance. But, doing that ignores the very thing that produces results in learning and development. Expecting a student to perform a task that he is not developmentally capable of is inappropriate, but many elementary school programs do not take this into consideration. Students can be forced to sit for long periods and listen to a teacher giving instructions, but they are incapable of comprehending most of what is said after the first few minutes. Children up to age eight have different developmental needs than older children. Knowing the attention span, what developmental task the brain is working on, and the things that interest this age child are essential to helping the child learn. That's why it's important for teachers to become familiar with the developmental stages of this age students. For that reason, I've included some of these developmental markers in the Appendix.

Knowing what helps this age students learn best is what compels ECE educators to approach teaching them with more hands-on activities.

So, how do we do it?

Providing activity centers, working on positive discipline and listening and knowing children's interest are the keys to incorporating them into the curriculum. One of the best ways to find out about what kids need and want and to get to know them is through something called, Class Meetings. This is sort of a round table discussion that can be used to find out what is going on in the child's life at home, such as a birthday, family member's illness, or hurried morning with no breakfast. Children learn many useful and positive things in Class Meetings, such as, respect, waiting and taking turns, empathy, making decisions

based on someone else's idea, recalling events in sequence, listening carefully and understanding verbal messages, and it enhances their language skills.

Class Meetings can then be used to map out ideas for the day's lessons. Taking a general topic in social studies, the teacher can help the students to brain storm what they want to learn about the subject. She can use a web type mapping diagram, a list, an outline or any number of things to record the ideas. From this list the children have contributed to, they will be more involved and interested in finding the answers. The teacher asks open ended, leading questions to help the students problem solve. This age students love riddles and puzzles, so it's a natural segway into researching their book, or the library, the computer, or doing an interview to find the solutions. Then they can share their findings in a Class Meeting or small group. The teacher can keep a record or check list of the things they've learned and make sure they've covered all areas in the text. No need for daily work grading, and in some cases, tests. Because the goal of a test is to determine if the child knows the concept, if he can show that he does, and the teacher can document through recording, or summarizing his reports, some of the seat work and tests can be eliminated.

You can start Class Meetings any time, and it's really pretty simple. Just gather the students together in a circle, preferable in a comfortable area of the room, not in their desks. You don't have to tell them you are going to begin a Class Meeting, just begin by asking some questions about their weekend or morning. At the end of the meeting you can say something like, "I really enjoyed our Class Meeting. We'll have another one tomorrow." When you and the students are ready, you can add other elements to the meetings.

I've included an example of what a morning meeting might look like. The most important thing is that students feel safe to share "anything" they want without being put down or reprimanded. Another important aspect of Class Meetings is acknowledgments. Children learn how to notice and voice positive things about other students and they share these in Class Meetings. In a short time, they begin to spontaneously acknowledge others outside of the meetings. This makes the classroom a very positive environment.

We go over the calendar/weather, and Bible time. Then I pass out Hopper, a stuffed frog. Hopper hops each day from child to child. The rule is only the person holding Hopper can speak. I start the topic of discussion...it can be anything from a favorite color, food, sport, etc., to tell about a time that you were frightened.

It only takes Hopper five minutes or so to go around the class since only the child with Hopper can speak and the children do not comment on what others say. (This rule also helps the children feel safe to say what they want without the fear of being ridiculed by others.) When a child says something that causes concern to me, I can take that child aside later to discuss it more privately.

On Friday Hopper goes home with a child for the weekend and takes his Diary with him. With the help of their parents the child writes in the diary on Sunday night what Hopper did over the weekend. In class on Monday we always have fun seeing what Hopper did. Hopper does have a friend Happy Frog who substitutes if Hopper is left at home by accident!

I hope this gives you an idea for a quick way to get to know your students a little better!

After students are comfortable sharing about several topics, usually two weeks' time, it's time to introduce problem

solving. Some teachers have regular Class Meetings every morning as students arrive, and every afternoon just before they go home. When it comes to problem solving, students “call” a Class Meeting anytime during the day if they don’t feel the problem can wait to be resolved. At first this may seem like a real disruption of the day’s schedule. But teachers who hang in there for at least three weeks find that students will begin to postpone the necessity of resolving conflicts when they know the problem will not be forgotten and their needs will be met. There’s no sense in me reinventing the wheel, so you can refer to the “Class Meetings” book for more detailed instructions about how to help students with acknowledgments and problem solving.

More about learning styles. It’s important for teachers to understand a child’s learning style, because an auditory learner, for example, might not be able to do well on a written test, but give the test verbally, and he knows all the answers. Likewise, another student may do well with a written test, while a verbal one he struggles with. This is why standard achievement tests and IQ tests are not a good representation of a child’s cognitive development, nor of his knowledge about a certain subject area.

So, taking good observation notes, and recording them in journals, on check lists, running records, or summary interpretations are very valuable to this kind of program. The best way to document that a child has gained the concepts required in a certain subject area is with a portfolio on each individual child. Portfolios can contain examples of children's work related to a particular concept the teacher is looking for, observation records and assessments, based on those observations. They also contain summaries of the meaning of the observations and describe what the child has accomplished rather than what he has failed at. In addition, it often helps in making a recommendation to the family and/ or teaching staff to help him in some area he is struggling with. Portfolios can include the entire “journal” kept on the child during the year, or just important entries. They are usually looked at during conferences and help the family members identify areas that they would like help with and to make a plan for how they will support the teacher’s goals for the child while at home, and then can include summaries of teacher/parent conferences.

The portfolio can contain an overview of a child's family background, including pictures of the child's family members, home and community. A brief history of the child's life, siblings and primary caregivers can be included. Family members can contribute observations or generalized comments about the child's behavior, growth, or play at home. It becomes a treasured keepsake or scrapbook for some families that can include important events in the child’s life during that year.

I mentioned journals. Journals help family members and other staff members to communicate and assess a child. Journals can have entries from the parent, the grandparent, baby-sitter, the child, and other family members. It serves as a great tool to keep everyone informed about the child's progress, stresses at home, conflicts at school. Children can tell about their day through pictures or writing and share these at home. Some journals stay at school, others are passed back and forth daily. It’s a great tool.

Including the families more in a school's program is an element that can also enhance a child’s ability to learn and develop cognitive connections. When children feel their family and the school are working together and are in agreement, they learn better. So, it’s important to get to know the families as much as the students and try a variety of ways to include them in the teaching process. Some ideas might be to invite parents in to read the daily story, or the social studies page and then talk about what they know about the subject. They can be included in brain storming sessions in Class Meetings. They can also contribute in putting together or collecting items for an activity for one of the centers. Involve them as much as you can. If

you are studying science, think of a way you can get a dad to contribute. Try to include an invitation at least once a week with some parent or family member, even if it's just to sit in and listen and observe. Have them write down what they see from their point of view. Sending home pamphlets or articles on different areas of ECE methods and philosophy is useful to help them feel valued and a part of what is going on with their child at school.

This kind of inclusion opens up the reality of different cultures and subcultures within the main dominant culture. You might find out why you have trouble getting a student to look you in the eye, or maybe you are uncomfortable with that, but the parent demands it. Reading stories about children from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds can begin the discussion about how people are different and how that is ok. Children of this age are well into recognizing the differences in skin colors, and not necessarily the obvious, but lighter and darker, hair color, eye color and personalities. Although they may not know how to talk about it.

Class Meetings can help children understand these differences and that there are different ways to solve a problem and their way isn't the only way. Children of this age are still trying to figure that out. Getting input from their peers in Class Meetings on how to solve a problem, without adult input, unless the solution is unacceptable, helps them figure these things out and remember them better than lectures or instructions from an adult. This age group is also moving away from parent or adult acceptance and approval to that of their peers and wanting to be a part of a larger society than the family.

Another thing that Class Meetings is good for is resolving conflicts and teaching students how to cooperate with others, take turns, postpone interruption of class time for conflicts to be solved later, and take responsibility to resolve conflicts in a more acceptable way than hitting, yelling and name calling. The book, "Class Meetings," outlines how a teacher can start using class meetings and how beneficial it can be in many ways.

When it comes to conflicts, adults should recognize them as part of the growing and learning process and view them as opportunities to guide appropriate behavior. It should be considered part of the curriculum rather than an interruption. ECE recommends positive guidance rather than punishment for all conflicts or misbehavior.

Because children are most open to learning right after misbehaving or making a mistake, these teachable moments need to be calm and receptive for children to understand the consequences of their actions or accept correction. Punishment throws children into emotional turmoil and disrupts the teachable moment.

To fully understand the many different guidance techniques, adults need to take the initiative to learn about them. Reading the "Foundations" book I mentioned earlier will help tremendously. In the meantime, I've included some basic guidelines to discipline recommended for ECE programs.

- **Time-Out** should not be overused. Some children will see this as a positive thing because they are over stimulated in the group and need time to clear their heads. But other children, especially those from homes that value togetherness will see the separation as a punishment. For these children other forms of guidance must be considered first. The child should not be required to sit for a specific time, only until they are ready to alter their behavior, and the teacher needs to help with other techniques so the child can acquire the skills he was lacking that created the time-out.

- **Consequences** need to be natural or logical. A natural consequence works better than nagging. If a child leaves his lunch home, or forgets his jacket, the parent and teacher can agree to not let him have lunch. The student might have to stay in at recess if it's too cold outside or suffer the cold without borrowing a coat. The teacher can ask questions to help him internalize that he is responsible to remember his lunch and coat. "What can you do to make sure you get lunch tomorrow?" –

“Remember to bring my lunch.” and “What can you do to make sure you get to go out to recess tomorrow?”

Logical consequences are consequences associated with the “crime”. If a student continuously interrupts the group or story, they can be removed from the group. “If you interrupt again, you will have to leave the group and miss the story.” Telling the child, he will miss recess for interrupting the group is inappropriate because the misbehavior had nothing to do with recess. But, if he is at recess and is unable to control his hitting, throwing objects, kicking, etc. after several attempts to redirect him, sending him in would be a logical consequence. “It seems you are unable to control your behavior today. You will have to go inside. Let’s talk about this later to see what you can do different so you can play all recess tomorrow.”

Consequences should be brief, swift and limited to the mildest form so they can see the direct and immediate connection between their behavior and the punishment.

- **Set Limits** and enforcing them will keep children safe and free to experience the environment without a lot of negative attention. Physical limits restrict the child from getting hurt, like a locked cabinet. Adult limits are not physical, yet, restrict behavior by adults’ words. Try to tell children what they can do, instead of what they shouldn’t. “Walk until you are outside. (Not, “Don’t run inside.”) “You can run when you are outside.” The child may test this limit and run. An adult must be ready for this inevitable testing and be prepared to guide the child until he complies with the limit. “I see you are having trouble walking inside. Let’s go back to the classroom. Now when you can walk to the door, you can go out and run.” If he is unable to walk with this direction, take him back again and ask, “What can you do different this time so you can go outside?” Getting him to say what he needs to do will help him put that into action. “Walk.” - “Ok, do you need my helping hand?” Hold his hand if he says yes, don’t if he says no. Let him find out if he needs your help or not.

- **Redirecting** inappropriate behavior gives opportunity for children to be empowered and eliminates power struggles. It offers choices the adult can accept and yet keeps the child safe. “I don’t like it when you tear your paper up. What else can you do when you are feeling like tearing up your paper?”

If he can’t come up with anything acceptable, “Spit at you,” he says. - “I wouldn’t like that either,” you say with a calm quiet and even voice. “What else could you do?” or ask, “What would make you feel comfortable so you can do your work again?” Finally, make a couple suggestions he can choose from. “You can raise your hand, or come to my desk and use your words, “Miss Crystal, I’m feeling upset, can I have a short break?” - “You can put “one” puzzle together, sort through these beads, find all the blue ones and count them, or spend 3 minutes playing in the rice box. Which one do you want to do?” - “I will need you to finish that paper before the end of the day, before you can go to lunch, etc.” (If that is possible).

- **Teaching children to express their feelings** can help them get along with others and defuse many conflicts that could escalate into power struggles. Children can't hear what you are telling them when their feelings are stirred up. You have to acknowledge the feelings before they are ready to move to the next step of hearing your guidance. Adults have to keep control of their own feelings and model expressing them also. Children will learn more by watching than by lecturing, this is why it is important for adults to set good examples for children. The adult needs to accept that children will express emotions, like anger in inappropriate ways until they learn how to express them otherwise and the teacher must teach them that. First put the emotions into words: "You are angry that she didn't want you to paint on her paper. Tell her how you feel. It's ok to let her know you are upset that she told you no." "But it's not ok to hit her."

Remember, school-aged children often argue as a way of processing information to come to conclusions about give and take, social standing, and how much asserting is acceptable.

- **Model pro-social behavior** yourself. Demonstrate the proper way to treat others, pets and toys if you think someone might abuse them. "See, the dog likes a soft touch on the head, like this, be gentle."

Although spanking is not allowed in schools, it's important to understand why ECE educators view this form of punishment as inappropriate. Basically, spanking destroys the opportunity for a teachable moment. The child's feelings need to be free of fear, pain, embarrassment, belittling and intimidation, as well as many other possible emotions that result from physical punishment in order for the brain to be open to any guidance offered. In addition, the main thing they learn from spanking is that force is ok to use when you want someone to do what you say. They will be confused as they try this method on another child, or the adult and it doesn't work too well. Many families believe that spanking is an acceptable and effective tool, especially in certain situations.

Trying to determine what is behind a child's behavior can be difficult. But there is always something. Discovering what that is and meeting the need can eliminate the need for punishment and correction and provide a more positive environment for the child. Here are six questions to ask that will help you determine what the child is trying to communicate:

1. Are the child's basic needs met?

If he is acting out at 10:00 every day, he might be hungry. Let him eat a snack. He may be cold, or tired. If you can, offer a place to rest. A half hour of sleep goes a long way to learning later.

2. Does the environment fit the child?

If he is constantly tearing up papers, throwing tantrums or being disruptive, perhaps he's being asked to do things that he isn't cognitively ready for. Maybe the room has too much stimulation for a child with autism, as an example. Adjust the curriculum or change the room.

3. Is the child's behavior a cry for attention?

If he's acting out and getting negative attention, try to ignore the behavior if you can, and then when he is doing something during free time, without having to follow rules, get down to his level and lavish him with attention. "Tell me about your drawing. I see you are using blue for the car."

4. Is the child's behavior a response to feeling powerless?

Is he hitting, kicking, name calling? Give him some responsibility. "I need someone to help me clean the blackboard, hand out these papers and straighten up the puzzles. How about you? Which one will you help with?"

5. Did the child learn this behavior by being rewarded for it in the past?

When the lunch bell rings for students to return to class and he runs the other way, don't reward him by running after him, screaming, scolding or threatening. Instead pay as little attention as possible. If all the other children return and he's left alone, he will most likely come in on his own. Watch him from the window or just outside the door to make sure he will be safe. And don't reward him with, "If you come in now, you can put a puzzle together."

6. Does the child clearly understand why his behavior is inappropriate?

When he name-calls, hits, kicks, whines, etc. let him know how this affects others. "Sally doesn't like it when you grab the markers. She gets angry. Just look at her face! Sally, tell him how you are feeling." - "I feel angry because you marked on my drawing." - You can also help him feel empathy by asking how he would feel if Sally did that to him. Then let him know that's how she feels. You can also be real about how his actions effect his relationships with other students. "The other students don't want to play with you when you push them." "If you want something, use your words and ask. If they say no,

think of other ways the two of you can solve the problem. You might ask Sally if you can have the marker when she is done with it.”

Dealing with children with special needs can be difficult and frustrating. Students with special needs must be regarded as unique individuals with particular developmental patterns and timing. They must be allowed to move at their own pace and not be pushed. Here are some strategies to look at that can help.

- preventing challenging behavior by designing the environment and activities specifically for the child.
- using effective behavioral interventions that are positive and address both form and function of the behavior that maybe typical for a younger child.
- seeking external consultation and technical assistance or additional staff support.
- training all staff in skills necessary for effective prevention and intervention programs.

With all children families need to be part of the program, but especially when intervention is necessary. Success comes from a coordinated effort between family members and professionals, so the approach addresses both the child and the family needs and their strengths, to be effective.

Setting up the classroom environment has a lot to do with helping direct children and keeping them from being disruptive. Too much open area invites children to run, jump and use their gross motor muscles. So, when you set up center activity areas, use the furniture, tables, shelves, desks, etc. to break up the open area. Have activities in areas organized so that it’s obvious what is expected in that area. For example, don’t mix the art supplies with library books or you may have paint where you don’t want it, and try to keep distractions to a minimum by having tempting activities out of direct site while doing seat work. Having an area where students can go for quiet activities, like a reading corner with large pillows or cushions can make them feel safe and secure and gives them somewhere to calm down when they need a time out.

The outside play area should have lots of room for running, climbing and pretending. It would be great to have bikes, balls, jump ropes, swings and all sorts of opportunities to use the gross motor muscles. Sand boxes with cars and trucks and various measuring containers is also good outdoor equipment. Teachers should try to play with students when they are outside for a period of the time and help them learn to play cooperative games with other students. The outside area, like the inside area should be set up so students can tell what is expected and not expected. Clearly defined rules about the use of balls and equipment should be voices and posted.

Appendix

Developmental Markers for school-aged children:

- brain becomes more efficient in function; lateralization improves of the corpus callosum (the tissue connecting the two halves of the brain)
- binocular vision, the ability of the eyes to work together, is usually well established; helps in reading and close work, but continued some farsightedness necessitates larger print.
- greater ability for running, jumping and balance, and sequence a series of movement skills as in a somersault.
- more competent at throwing and catching a ball and other team sports skills
- can engage in games with rules and cooperate as a member of a team
- highly sensitive to social comparison, especially difficult to lose
- individual competition should be minimized to team competitions

- increased memory and increased use of memory strategies
- Piaget postulates cognition undergoes a major reorganization from an information-processing perspective; a gradual change occurs in the way information is processed and procedures followed to solve problems
- concrete operational thinking of primary-age is moving to more concrete operational thinking. conceptualizing and solving problems about situations, objects, or symbols, but must have a concrete referent; thus, connecting the abstract concept of a cognitive development stage to something real and familiar. It will be several years before he can reason about a hypothetical situation or abstract construct.
- more proficient and flexible in their use of mental representations required for reading, math and other content learning.
- can now engage in games with rules, can now understand and consistently apply rules.
- ability to understand multiple perspectives, and reverse thinking – for example, subtraction can “undo” or reverse addition. When facing a person can reverse the directions and understand left and right from a perspective other than their own.
- language is more complex, partly because they understand the same word can have multiple meanings.
- begin to write stories that have literary elements such as beginnings, ending, plots, and characters.
- begin to pay attention to the rhythms and sounds of language and attempt to capture them in print.
- begin moving toward expository writing, that is, writing to argue, persuade, direct, and explain.
- concepts of time and distance are improving but still are not mature. Can generally categorize past, current, and future events, but they are not yet able to use dates to sequence historical time.
- classification gradually extends to more than one attribute and class inclusion, that is, an object can be a member of more than one group simultaneously.
- can typically master seriation, to place objects in order by length, weight, or size – noting that an object is both larger than one object and smaller than another.
- not capable of problem solving as an adult, or mentally manipulate abstract ideas, such as, mathematical algorithms, grasp dates in history, or fully comprehend the irreversibility of death.
- arguing is a way of sorting out what they think and assessing themselves socially. Through squabbles they learn to give-and-take. Guidance is necessary to help them learn to argue more effectively.
- can be rigid and fixed on the validity of their own hypotheses (how they have proven something to be true) instead, they change the facts to fit a new hypothesis, rather than modify the hypotheses because the facts do not support it. Example: A child may hold to his theory that he is poor at soccer, despite contrary evidence that others cite. Teachers should remember this and not assume a child is being stubborn or obstinate.
- improved capacity in short and long-term memory, although not yet mature. Adults remember 7 chunks of information at once, while this age only 5 chunks. Of course, for those accurately diagnosed with ADHD, this memory capacity does not develop naturally and may require that adults attend more carefully to the kinds of stimuli that children receive.
- better able to employ memory strategies such as rehearsal.
- expressive vocabulary expands from spoken to written communication.
- typically love the kinds of jokes, puns, tongue twisters and riddles that reflect their new language capacities, unlike preschoolers who tend to be limited to silliness and bathroom humor.
- often misinterpret a sentence like “The boy was hit by the ball” as meaning the boy hit the ball.
- better able to think about and reflect on rules of behavior and understand right and wrong.
- aware that another person can have different thoughts than his or her own.
- begin to make more accurate judgments about what is true and false, but often rigidly apply newfound understanding of justice and fair play, conscience is often excessively strict.
- typically treat every little mistake as major crime, deserving of terrible punishment or dire consequences. Adults can help assess mistakes realistically and find ways of correcting them.
- very concerned with fairness, closely observe other's infractions and inequitable actions, adults behaving fairly is important as they insist fairness requires absolute equality in treatment (everyone must get the same exact amount of snack food).
- better able to empathize with other people and accept the “idea” of giving special
- consideration to those in greater need.
- begin to understand they can feel two emotions at the same time, i.e. “I like Joan, but I hate the way she always hangs around”.
- judge themselves in a more balanced way, “I’m good at math, but not good at reading.”, yet begin to understand the limits of their own abilities and are more prone to social comparison.

- typically form at least three images of themselves: their perception of academic, social and physical competence. Important for them to succeed at these or their self-image suffers, resulting in less effort in academics, more aggressive and disliked in social circles, and less motivation for sports.
- becoming intensely interested in peers, adult intervention and coaching can help to develop better peer relationships.
- show marked preference for same-gender playmates, and rejection of the opposite sex.
- friendships marked by “genuine” give and take, negotiation of differences, shared experiences, and mutual trust, unlike preschoolers whose friends are those who do things they like. It’s important that they are not divided from their friends and miss opportunities to interact and work on social skills.
- the urge to master the skills of esteemed adults and older children is as powerful as the urge to stand and walk in a 1-year-old. Tap this strong motivation for mastery with opportunities to develop skills, remember they can feel they have failed all too easily in any of the three areas that define their image.
- being pressured to acquire skills too far beyond their ability or judged competitively—receiving low grades on their work or hearing constant correction—their motivation to learn as well as their self-image may be impaired.
- can sit and attend for longer time periods, but far from mature physically and need lots of opportunities to be physically active with running, jumping, or bicycling.
- role playing problem situations that involve children helps to establish and enforcing the few basic rules necessary for a group to live together. These are more effective than punishing, criticizing or continually comparing children.
- can typically take care of their own physical care needs, need freedom to use the restroom as the need arises, not waiting for “recess.” Can be a huge distraction of the learning process. Set up some system where they can mark a chart when they go, instead of waiting to ask the teacher.

Center Ideas:

Math, Science, Social Studies:

- For classification, identification and descriptions you can use a tin of buttons purchased from a second hand store, the kind Grandma had in her sewing room, a small tool box filled with springs, nails, nuts and bolts, screws, switches, etc.
- Making Charts can be done with many activities, including a field trip where students make note of their favorite display or aspect of the trip, then the class charts those who like the same things and why, such as the color of something, texture, interest. Students can contribute a list of things and students can vote for their favorite.
- Students can make, or bring bake sale items to sell to parents, the community or older students at lunch time. They can take turns in “shifts” to help them with the concept of time. A timer, or an hour glass can be used to mark the time. (perhaps they can make their own hour glass that last for 10 minutes) A small cash register and calculator can help with the math and counting back from the price of the item to the correct change required as they get proficient.
- A mock bake sale or store can be set up in class or designed on card stock with prices on items to be sold, cards with customers and items to be purchased and a payment register to record the change made.
- For spatial recognition they can use shaped objects, either pre shaped squares, triangles, etc. or irregular objects like a super ball, match box car, jack, puzzle piece, dice, and see how many they can fit into another space drawn on a card stock, or make with string, pipe cleaners, etc. Then record their findings.
- More classification on the above items, are they hard or soft, how big are they in inches, regular or irregular in shape.
- Random math problems that are relevant to a child’s world. If you had 7 parents visit the class, how many more chairs would you need for everyone to sit in? If there are 5 children and only 3 swings, how many more swings would you need for everyone to swing? These can be done with card stock symbols for people, children, chairs, tables, swings, etc.

all placed in an envelope. They have to sort and classify before solving the problem.

- Playing games like dominos with dots and numbers, dice, matching the dots to squares that have corresponding numbers on them. Adding challenge by having two dice and adding the amount on both dice.
- Bingo is another game that can have many variations. Cards could contain animal classifications and the items selected in the whirling cage could be the corresponding animals. Rolling different items down a clear tube, varying the length and slant with match box cars, marbles, beads, rubber balls, etc. Things that will go fast or slower depending on their weight, mass, texture, etc. Then they record the results and write a hypothesis. Or guess before-hand and see if their hypothesis is correct.
- Examining small items from nature with a magnifying glass and microscope and recording what they find. Items like bugs, feathers of different kinds, pine cones, rocks, grass, almost anything, even water.
- Place sand, rice, bird seed or other type media in different hidden boxes and have them describe what they feel. Make the box from a shipping box, make sure you tape all seams and cracks, cut a hole in the top big enough for a hand to go in. Put the rice in, give instructions. You can't look in the box, you can feel it with your hands, don't take the media out of the box. Remove your hand, leaving everything in it, then record what you think it is, how it feels, soft, hard, spongy, etc. Provide some words they can choose from. Then, place a small item (paper clips work great, beads, buttons, etc.) from an envelope into the rice (they can do this) one item. Reach in, mix it up, then try to locate the item by feeling and not looking. The next week, try a different media, then compare the results. Chart the differences and talk about them. This really helps them understand the concept that people see things and feel things differently.
- The variations of these examples are endless.

Other things to think about:

Integrated Curriculum:

Because children's learning is integrated during the early years, the primary grade curriculum should also be integrated in social studies projects or using mathematical concepts in music and physical education (Bredekamp & Rosegrant 1995). Integration of curriculum is accomplished in several ways. The curriculum may be planned around topics of study related to learning goals. These topics relate to children's interests; for example, children may be interested in the ocean because they live near it. Oceanographic study presents opportunities to work on a variety of activities in which children do reading, writing, math, science, social studies, art, and music. Such a project or ongoing focus of study involves sustained, cooperative effort and involvement over many days and perhaps weeks. Providing learning areas in which children plan and select their activities also helps facilitate integrated curriculum (144, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, NAEYC, Sue Bredekamp and Carol Copple, Editors).

Transitions:

Transitions may be hard or easy, depending on the group and the adults' skill in handling them. Some ways to ensure smooth transitions between activities for older children:

- Warn children ahead of time so they can adjust to the idea that the current activity is about to end.

- Try to arrange transitions so there is as little waiting as possible.

Problem behavior often coincides with waiting periods. There is usually a way to prevent lining up the whole group to wash hands. If children are called a few at a time, the others can continue what they are doing so they don't have to wait around. In some programs, children wait up to one-fourth of the day!

- Eliminate chaotic, crowded areas in the classroom by adjusting the schedule or rearranging the physical environment. If, for example, the cubbies are all grouped in the same part of the room and everyone heads for them at once, there may be shoving and crowding.
- Don't wait to start the next activity until every single child is present and attentive; instead, begin as soon as the first children arrive so something is already happening when the others get there.
- A specialized kind of transition occurs when children arrive for the day and again when they leave. These moments are the biggest transitions of all, because the children leave one environment and set of people for another. Separation anxiety can play a big role at arrival time. Not only children may feel insecure during this transition but also parents. Arrivals can set the tone for the whole day and create a juggling act for the early childhood educator. It's quite a challenge to greet children and parents, make them feel welcome, exchange information, help with feelings of separation by being understanding, reassuring, and supportive, and watch the rest of the group at the same time. A well-prepared environment helps a lot to entice children to interesting materials, toys, and activities and to make the separation easier.

If crying, protesting, or anger is part of the transition, it's important to accept the feelings and proceed slowly. Let both the child and the parent know you care about their feelings and show confidence that the child will be fine. For some children, the parent's presence for a while eases the transition; for others, it is agony (297, Foundations of Early Childhood Education, Janet Gonzalez-Mena).

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