

Bright Futures' Statement of Philosophy on Curriculum

Bright Futures seeks to provide a positive learning environment for children of all abilities, ranging in age from six weeks to five years. We emphasize children's unique abilities and their individual strengths and needs. Children learn at their own pace through active exploration with guidance and positive reinforcement from teachers.

To build knowledge children need to actively manipulate their environment. Teachers act as facilitators, arranging the environment to allow children to safely explore the classroom and interact with a variety of different materials, engage in a wide range of activities, and develop relationships with peers and adults. Our classrooms are designed to allow children to move easily from one center to another, with ready access to materials and equipment. There are regular opportunities for varied types of learning activities including large and small group, individual, teacher guided and child driven. We believe that children learn best when they have choices about what they learn. Our curriculum is emergent, utilizing the children's interests and ideas as the basis for lesson planning. Classroom materials are clearly labeled to support children's emerging letter recognition and allow them to easily identify materials. Teachers engage in conversations with children throughout the day, supporting their development of communication skills and providing them with opportunities to talk about their experiences.

Our educators use the eight domains of the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards (approaches to learning, language development & communication, literacy, mathematics, science, creativity, physical health & development, and social & emotional development) as a guide when planning and implementing the curriculum. We work to support the learning needs of each child in our program and to help them develop a love of learning that will prepare them for all future learning.

We strive to:

- Encourage the growth and development of all children by providing experiences that promote feelings of success, competence, and enjoyment.
- Make learning a positive experience for children by incorporating Play as an integral part of the curriculum.
- Help achieve social, emotional, physical, and cognitive goals.
- Assist young children in using the environment productively and to see themselves as capable learners.

Bright Futures' Curriculum

Goals:

1. To encourage children to be active participants in the learning process.
2. To allow for a wide range of experiences by providing a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials.
3. To support children's growth and development in all areas of learning including, cognitive, social/emotional and physical.
4. To support children's growing independence by providing opportunities for children to make choices in the context of life in the classroom and the larger community.

Rationale:

Curriculum is more than just the daily lesson plans and activities of each group. It encompasses the daily schedule, the availability and use of materials, transitions from one activity or routine to another, and how routine classroom activities are implemented. Children build concepts and increase their understanding of the world around them through active exploration and manipulation of their environment. Each classroom has materials that are appropriate to the age range and abilities of the children in the group. Materials are selected to give children a variety of choices and to ensure that each child has the opportunity to interact with all materials.

Assessments:

All children from infancy through preschool are assessed on a regular basis in a variety of ways. Individual child observations are conducted on each child at least one time per month. Children are screened using norm referenced, standardized tools to help identify any areas of concern that may require additional evaluations or interventions. A portfolio of each child's work is kept and passed from one classroom to the next as the child moves through the different age groups. On-going assessment tools are used at least three times per year that align with the RI Early Learning Standards and support the teachers understanding and knowledge of each child's learning and developmental needs. Teachers utilize information from all of these sources to help individualize lessons and activities so that the needs of each child are addressed. Information about assessments is shared with parents on an on-going basis through regular communication, parent-teacher conferences, and assessment results sent home.

Infant/Toddler Curriculum (6 weeks to 3 years)

The first three years of a child's life are a critical time for learning and developing. It is during these early years that children begin building trust in their environment and the people in it. Since infants and young toddlers have not yet mastered verbal communication we incorporate simple sign language into our interactions with them to help minimize frustrations. We strive to nurture that trust and foster positive experiences designed to promote a sense of security. As children develop a sense of trust they begin to develop the confidence to explore their environment with increasing levels of independence. It is during these early years that children begin to develop a sense of self that will help them in their growing need for independence and in building their self-help skills. We understand that children learn and develop at different rates therefore we provide a curriculum that is based on respect for each child's individual needs, interests, and routines. The daily schedule is designed to allow children opportunities to interact with their environment in a variety of ways including independent exploration, guided play, creative expression, choice making and quiet reflecting.

Intellectual Development

Language and literacy development is encouraged by:

- Modeling appropriate speech
- Providing concrete experiences to foster understanding of concepts such as empty/full, up/down, and big/little
- Encouraging children's use of language to express their ideas and emotions
- Using labeling to support children's ability to name and identify objects and actions
- Asking children open-ended questions
- Providing opportunities for dramatic play and other role taking activities such as puppets and doll house to encourage the use of language
- Using simple signs for words such as more, eat and all done to promote communication with children who are not yet using verbal language
- Incorporating music and finger plays into the daily routine
- Allowing regular unfettered access to age appropriate books
- Including story reading/telling as a regular part of the daily routine

- Using a classroom picture schedule with children beginning at 18 months to support their understanding of time and routines

Emerging understanding of math concepts is encouraged by:

- Providing a variety of materials for sorting by shape, size and color as well as matching, stacking and nesting
- Actively engaging children in play with blocks, beads and puzzles
- Modeling and encouraging children's counting, one-to-one correspondence, comparing by attributes, and measuring

Children are introduced to science concepts through everyday phenomena such as:

- Weather changes, the sun and rain
- Snow melting
- Mixing paint to see how colors change
- Sand and water play
- Interactions with materials from nature such as leaves, pinecones, and seashells

Social studies concepts are embedded in everyday activities such as:

- Family collages
- Books about similarities and differences
- Multi-cultural dolls, toys, books and pictures

Creative Art

Art experiences emphasize the process rather than the product. Opportunities to work independently, explore different medium and practice new and developing fine motor skills helps to foster positive self-concept. Collaborative projects promote the development of social and language skills. Art experiences are diverse and multi-sensory:

Visual Arts:

- Painting with a variety of different tools
- Collages using a variety of materials
- Drawing with crayons, markers, chalk, etc.
- Tearing and cutting paper
- Finger painting
- Gluing and pasting
- Creating with clay and play dough

Music and Drama:

- Role playing, dramatic or pretend play
- Singing and dancing
- Using instruments to explore sound
- Moving with ribbons or scarves

Motor Skills

Opportunities for children to work on their gross motor development are provided throughout the day during indoor and outdoor play. Children use a variety of equipment including:

- Climbers and slides
- Riding toys, both push and pedal
- Balls to throw and kick

Activities provided for children to develop their fine motor skills are:

- Manipulatives, puzzles, stringing beads and play dough
- Finger plays

Social/Emotional Development

Children are valued as individuals and encouraged to develop skills at their own pace. Self-confidence is promoted through activities such as:

- Problem-solving, following directions, responsibility
- Individual, small and large group activities that provide opportunities for positive feedback from teachers and peers

Preschool Curriculum (3 to 5 years)

Inclusion:

Bright Futures is a fully inclusive preschool program where children of all abilities learn and play together in a rich, nurturing environment. All learning activities are designed along a developmental continuum so that children with typical needs and children with special needs can participate in the same activities with varying levels of independence and teacher support. Children learn to understand and respect differences in both physical appearance and in ability.

A Reggio Emilia Inspired Program:

Bright Futures incorporates the methods developed over the past 60 years in Reggio Emilia, Italy into our curriculum. The Reggio Approach views children as capable, independent learners who thrive in an environment that allows them to explore their interests and participate as full members

of a learning community. The approach is emergent, with the teachers taking cues from the children to identify areas of interest for potential topics of discussion and projects. Creativity, cooperation, and a sense of community, which includes peers, teachers, and family, are central to the Reggio Approach.

Standards-Based Learning:

Bright Futures uses the Rhode Island Early Learning Standards as a guide for planning developmentally appropriate learning experiences that are play-based. The Standards are part of our curriculum and support each child's learning on the road to kindergarten and beyond.

Intellectual Development

Language and literacy development is enhanced through:

- Verbally communicating and listen to others
- Providing opportunities for role playing and dramatic play
- Listening to music and singing
- Labeling classroom materials and centers
- Identifying own name and the letters of own name
- Listening to books on tape
- Providing opportunities for dictated writing
- Journaling
- Including sign language and pictures schedules as part of classroom routines

Math skills are introduced through play. Some concepts include:

- Shapes, sizes, patterns and sequencing
- Sorting, categorizing, and making comparisons
- Counting, numeral identification and one to one correspondence
- Measuring and weighing
- Graphing

Science concepts are developed by:

- Observing seasonal changes related to weather, plant life, animal behavior and activities of people
- Sorting and categorizing according to properties or attributes of items

- Growing plants
- Explorative play with magnets, sand, water, magnifying glasses, etc.

Social studies concepts are introduced by:

- Talking about differences and similarities of people and families
- Experiencing our fully inclusive classrooms and talking about special needs and what they mean
- Field trips into the community
- Talking about community helpers and other occupations
- Opportunities for dramatic play, to take on different perspectives and community roles

Creative Art

Art experiences emphasize the process rather than the product. Giving children the time and space to explore different medium and the freedom to work independently supports their development of increased attention span and fine motor skills. Allowing children to express themselves creatively fosters their self-concept and encourages emotional competence and a sense of independence. Art experiences include:

- Drawing with a variety of different tools (i.e. crayons, pencils, markers, finger paints)
- Painting with a variety of different tools (i.e. small and large brushes, sponges, feathers, marbles)
- Cutting, tearing and gluing
- Creating collages from many different materials such as tissue paper, magazine pictures, fabrics, and foam and wooden pieces
- Working with clay and play dough to create shapes and forms
- Taking art outside with sidewalk chalk
- Self expression through music and movement, re-telling stories, dictated writing, and dramatic play

Motor Skills

Gross motor skills are developed during active playtimes inside and outside. Time is built into the daily schedule for children to run, jump, and climb to help build their physical coordination and develop their large

muscle groups. Active play also promotes children's physical health. Equipment used during active play includes:

- Climbers, slides, and tricycles
- Balls to kick, throw and roll
- Sports activities such as dribbling and shooting a basket ball and kicking a soccer ball

Children developed fine motor skills through activities such as:

- Writing with different tools (i.e. pencils, pens, markers)
- Tracing, copying and writing their names
- Working with manipulatives such as stringing beads, lacing cards, and building with small blocks

Social/Emotional Development

Each child is valued and nurtured as an individual and as a member of a group.

- Building self-esteem through communication, planning, responsibility, problem-solving, following directions, and imagination and sharing
- Children build skills in collaboration, compromise, self-expression, and respect for each other through group interactions
- Open-ended materials and activities allow children to work at their own pace, alone and in small and large groups