

Vision of Excellent Early Childhood Education (ECE) Experience (Birth-Age 5)

In all ECE settings, children working to become independent learners who are supported on a path to meet the goals they and their families have for college and/or career. Children are engaged in an inclusive, integrated, and cohesive classroom experience that targets developmentally appropriate learning. Children in ECE settings (birth through age 5) need opportunities to develop academic, social-emotional, language, and motor skills through a variety of learning approaches including small-group instruction, meaningful play, and learning centers. In ECE classrooms and settings:

Children learn and practice social-emotional skills.

To be ready for later grades and ongoing academic success, children need to develop key social-emotional skills such as self-regulation, peer interaction, problem-solving, patience, and perseverance. Teachers establish and facilitate relationships and design daily opportunities for children to learn and practice these skills and leverage in-the-moment opportunities to foster social-emotional growth.

Children are engaged in intellectually stimulating work that is developmentally appropriate.

Research indicates that all children, including the youngest learners, benefit from exposure to challenging content. Effective early learning classrooms create opportunities for young children to engage with complex academic work and participate in stimulating and engaging learning experiences in a manner that is appropriate for the developmental level of each child.

Children are engaged in an integrated and cohesive classroom experience that targets developmentally appropriate learning.

Children receive the supports they need to do the thinking.

Young children learn best by doing—learning through play, engaging with others and the environment, and exploring and thinking deeply about new concepts and the world. To facilitate this, teachers provide high-quality and thought-provoking work and materials and design an environment that support students in rising to the challenge with increasing independence.

Children practice and develop gross and fine motor skills.

Young children are constantly developing their motor skills. Teachers create environments that allow opportunities to move in different ways to practice and grow fine and gross motor skills.

Children learn and practice social-emotional skills.
Children are engaged in intellectually stimulating work that is developmentally appropriate.
Children:

- Demonstrate appropriate self-regulation and executive functioning skills
- Interact socially with peers and adults in appropriate ways including sharing, cooperating, etc.
- Engage in child-directed and center-based play about topics, texts, and concepts they are learning
- Demonstrate appropriate curiosity and patience

Children

- Listen to and discuss high-quality texts that build word and world knowledge
- Use a developmentally appropriate combination of dictating, writing, and drawing to express ideas about and information and evidence from texts
- Have opportunities to develop language including self and parallel talk and vocabulary, both through direct instruction as well as through classroom interactions
- Build numeracy skills through a variety of activities that allow exploration and construction of meaning about number concepts
- Make mathematical models to represent real-world situations
- Engage in complex, open-ended mathematics that develops conceptual understandings of math
- Build confidence and math fluency by practicing procedures and computations in a developmentally appropriate way, and apply those skills to real-world problems

Teachers:

- Foster students' social-emotional skills through deliberate skill development and integration into academic lessons, center activities, transitions and play
- Create opportunities for both adult-guided and child-led work and play
- Promote cooperation and sharing during group activities
- Create and teach clear systems and routines that are developmentally appropriate and support learning goals (and that students can maintain with increasing independence)
- Implement scaffolded questioning to engage students in conversations and promote oral language skills

Teachers:

- Use instructional materials that are high-quality and appropriately demanding for the students' development and time in the school-year
- Create a learning environment that is text-rich, language-rich and intellectually stimulating
- Teach foundational literacy skills, emphasizing development of phonological awareness
- Anchor language and literacy activities with high-quality texts, both literary and informational, and plan hands-on/child-driven activities, questions, and prompts that are text-dependent, worth answering and focused on comprehension of the text
- Regularly present formal and informal opportunities to draw, write, and/or narrate from text
- Create a language-rich classroom with multiple purposeful opportunities for students to build expressive and receptive language and vocabulary through narration, conversation, and text
- Create an environment that is intellectually stimulating and integrates language, literacy, and math into activities throughout the day

Children receive the supports they need to do the thinking.
Children practice and develop gross and fine motor skills.
Children:

- Are asking and answering thoughtful, and developmentally appropriate questions
- Engage in deep study of topics over an extended period of time
- Respond to and build on their peers' thinking, ideas, or answers, with appropriate teacher prompting or support
- Approach problems from multiple angles to discover how to solve problems and why those procedures work
- Communicate their thinking and reflect on their approach to problems

Children:

- Have daily opportunities to practice motor skills through self-care skills (e.g. getting dressed, eating, etc.)
- Are motivated to move by the people, materials, and environment around them
- Safely grow, test, and refine motor skills with guidance and feedback from adults
- Develop fine motor strength and skills by engaging with a variety of materials and manipulatives, including materials for art and writing

Teachers:

- Observe children's actions and student work to understand and respond to individual interests, abilities, and developmental progress, and adjust accordingly
- Plan instruction and design centers to encourage curiosity, patience, and persistence
- Provide students with opportunities and spaces for self-directed exploration and play
- Sequence problems and experiences to set students up to discover patterns, structure, and repetition in order to help them identify efficient pathways to solutions
- Allow students to discover how to solve problems using multiple approaches

Teachers:

- Provide developmentally appropriate materials and prompts for physical goals
- Plan activities that require increased muscle strength and coordination
- Structure an environment that requires children to experiment with and adjust balance, posture, and ways of moving
- Provide materials and spaces where students can build increasing independence in their motor skills

