



# Curriculum Guide

## **UWM Children’s Learning Center Curriculum Philosophy**

At the UWM Children’s Learning Center, we believe that, from birth, all people are capable and competent. Each person is an individual who will learn and develop in a unique way. With support from caring teachers and a rich learning environment, children will learn, play, explore, create and develop relationships.

### **The Children’s Learning Center curriculum is built upon the following philosophical beliefs:**

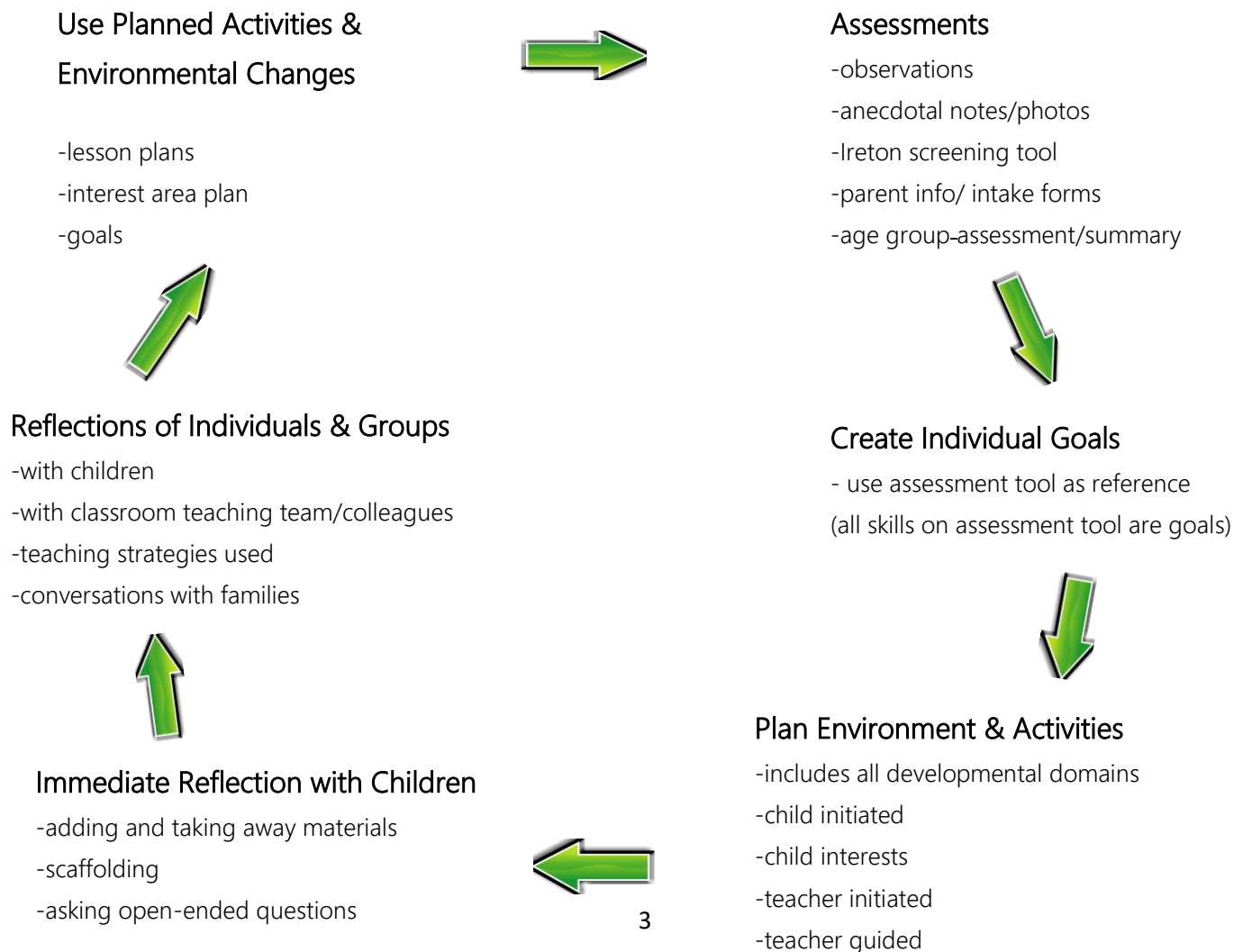
- Trusting, respectful, nurturing relationships between children and adults are essential. These caring bonds build the foundation for a classroom environment where children can take risks, learn from their mistakes and be joyful in their learning.
- The teacher’s role is as a facilitator and guide. As teachers support children in their problem-solving, we use a variety of teaching strategies, including modeling, providing appropriate learning materials, encouraging children’s independence and planning teacher-led activities.
- A play-based, hands-on, active learning environment is most appropriate for young learners. We believe that this approach, which includes the whole child, prepares children well for future success, both in school and in their lives.
- In their exploratory play, children manipulate materials, hypothesize, test theories, repeat activities and draw conclusions.
- In their social play, children learn how to be a member of a larger community.
- Children will make significant choices about use of materials and activities throughout the day. They are offered opportunities to participate in individual, small-group and large-group experiences.
- Teachers intentionally plan the classroom environment and experiences and provide materials to inspire learning, discovery, creativity and problem-solving.
- Research, theory and experience in the field of education informs our practice.
- Connections to the natural world are intrinsic to healthy growth and development. In addition to spending time outdoors, nature-based materials and experiences are provided both indoors and outside.
- Our curriculum emerges from children’s interests, teachers’ observations and events in the lives of the children and their families.
- The typical development of an age group, as well as the individual development of the children in a particular classroom, is used as a guide for curriculum planning. Observation, documentation and ongoing assessment of individual children and the classroom as a whole are used as the basis for curriculum planning.
- Our curriculum reflects, values and extends the richness of the diversity of the children, staff and families in a classroom. A respect for individual differences underlies all that we do.

# Curriculum and Assessment

This teaching cycle is from the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and is a continuous cycle of ongoing assessment, planning and curriculum goals, and implementation. Teachers observe children daily in order to plan for their engagement and learning. Teachers use anecdotal notes, interactions with children, and reviews of children's work to gain an accurate assessment of a child's knowledge and skill level. This ongoing assessment and gathering of information helps teachers determine what the child can do and what the child is ready to learn next.

Once individual learning goals are identified, teachers decide what should be implemented to promote development and what they want the children to learn. Individual goals are identified, prioritized, and planned for in our curricular plans. Teachers then provide meaningful activities that support the individual and group goals guided by supportive interactions and relationships. During this time, teachers collect information for the next planning phase in order to write new individual and group goals.

## Curriculum and Assessment Planning Cycle



# **UWM Children’s Learning Center**

## **Preschool Curriculum Guide**

The preschool programs at the UWM Children's Learning Center use an emergent curriculum (topics for learning ‘emerge’ from the interests of the children and teachers’ observations). We believe that children are competent learners. We consider each child's developmental abilities and needs, and foster growth across multiple developmental domains. Our curriculum happens through play-based activities. This approach takes advantage of the children's intrinsic motivation to engage in, and stay engaged in, educational activities and sets the foundation for positive early education experiences and lifelong lessons.

Teachers are active participants in all children's play, guiding their learning and taking careful observation of the changing needs, abilities and interests so that day-to-day experiences and lesson plans are relevant and significant for the children. The children develop meaningful relationships with other children and the adults who care for them.

Social-emotional development is at the core of our curriculum. Social-emotional and self-regulation learning experiences are rooted in nearly all activities that we do in the preschool program so that children have many opportunities to learn, practice and access these skills.

In this guide, we highlight developmental milestones and provide ways we teachers support these goals. We take into account that children grow and develop at different rates. We also understand that children will need different types of teacher support and scaffolded learning in order to meet these goals. We use the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Guiding Principles in our practice. These guiding principles reflect the knowledge base in scientific research, our values and our commitment to young children and families. We also draw from multiple educational theories such as Reggio Emilia, High/Scope, Montessori, Conscious Discipline, and Educaring for Infants in order to support each child in their learning.

While identified separately in this guide, all of these developmental areas overlap and learning takes place in multiple domains simultaneously. Skills and strategies are not learned in isolation. Our curriculum provides children with a rich variety of materials and hands-on experiences, as well as multiple opportunities over time to engage in their environment and partake in those activities/projects.

## **Social, Emotional and Regulatory Development**

### **A. *Social Development***

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Uses a variety of materials
- Participates in simple group activities
- Initiates or joins in play with others
- Plays cooperatively with other children
- Uses complex scenarios in play
- Is able to solve conflicts or problems with a teacher's assistance
- Is comfortable and confident in his/her relationships with others

Ways teachers support these goals:

- Teachers set up the classroom into interest areas with ample, engaging materials
- Teachers facilitate/model for children how to use the materials appropriately
- Teachers provide opportunities for adult-child and child-child interactions
- Teachers create and implement play opportunities that foster cooperation
- Teachers are active participants in play to encourage engagement
- Teachers model appropriate social skills
- Teachers coach children through conflict resolution
- Teachers create a sense of community
- Teachers will scaffold to encourage mastery
- Teachers develop strong relationships with each child to help children feel secure
- Teachers encourage children to develop strong relationships with them and with their peers
- Teachers use the assessment tool to inform and guide their practice

### **B. *Emotional Development***

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Has a positive disposition to his/her learning
- Shows persistence in approaching tasks
- Demonstrates self-direction/independence
- Can calm themselves when upset
- Shows kindness toward others
- Shows some understanding of moral reasoning (exploring ideas about fairness and good or bad behavior)
- Demonstrates the ability to delay gratification
- Is able to express feelings in acceptable ways

Ways teachers support these goals:

- Teachers provide experiences based on children's interests
- Teachers encourage children to express how they are feeling

- Teachers provide children with choices and redirection
- Teachers provide individual support
- Teachers provide choices within activities
- Teachers provide calming areas and sensory materials
- Teachers model kindness and respect
- Teachers have discussions and read stories about fairness and character
- Teachers create and follow a predictable and consistent classroom routine
- Teachers proactively set up environment for children to be successful
- Teachers acknowledge and label children's emotions
- Teachers demonstrate what feelings look like
- Teachers encourage positive expression of emotion
- Teachers use the assessment tool to inform and guide their practice

### C. ***Regulatory Development***

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Is able to choose activities and follow through on choices for extended periods of time
- Maintains focus to complete a simple task without assistance
- Moves through daily transitions smoothly
- Shows ability to adjust to new routines/situations
- Follows teachers' directions without testing limits
- Takes care of belongings
- Has the self-control to follow safety rules
- Approaches problems flexibly
- Shows empathy to others

Ways teachers support these goals:

- Teachers encourage children to take charge of their own learning
- Teachers provide verbal and visual cues to break a task into tangible steps
- Teachers create and follow a predictable and consistent classroom schedule and routines
- Teachers provide a well-organized learning environment
- Teachers develop a strong relationship with each child
- Teachers provide verbal and/or visual cues for transitions
- Teachers plan and implement activities that focus on self-control
- Children are encouraged to be accountable for their behavior
- Children are encouraged to come up with solutions when a conflict arises
- Teachers model concern and empathy
- Teachers use the assessment tool to inform and guide their practice

## **Physical Development**

### A. **Large Motor Development**

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Climbs up and down on various equipment
- Demonstrates basic loco-motor skills such as running, jumping, hopping and galloping
- Demonstrates throwing, kicking and catching skills
- Shows awareness of space by avoiding bumping into people or objects

Ways teachers support these goals:

- Teachers provide scheduled time for large motor play each day, outdoors and/or indoors
- Teachers provide appropriate play equipment designed for large motor experiences
- Teachers plan intentional gross motor activities
- Teachers plan creative movement activities
- Teachers model and participate in the play
- Teachers engage children in a variety of gross motor activities
- Teachers coach children on how to move their bodies safely through space
- Teachers encourage children to drink water after physical activity
- Teachers use the assessment tool to inform and guide their practice

### B. **Fine Motor Development**

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Manipulates small objects with strength and control
- Is able to control scissors
- Is able to control markers
- Is able to use utensils

Ways teachers support these goals:

- Teachers provide materials for children to build small muscles in hands and fingers
- Teachers plan intentional fine motor activities
- Teachers provide a variety of constructive materials
- Teachers provide sensory materials for children
- Teachers provide open-ended art experiences for children
- Teachers and children act out finger plays
- Teachers provide utensils at meal times
- Teachers use the assessment tool to inform and guide their practice

### C. **Self Help**

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Washes hands and face independently
- Dresses and undresses with minimal help

- Takes care of belongings
- Manages meal times with minimal help
- Shows awareness of bowel/bladder urges

Ways teachers support these goals:

- Teachers provide visual and verbal cues to break a task into tangible steps
- Teachers consistently enforce classroom expectations about self help
- Teachers set up an environment that is accessible and the appropriate size
- Teachers plan and implement self-help activities
- Teachers provide individual support
- Children are provided spaces for their personal belongings
- Teachers have children assist in caring for the classroom
- Teachers honor family culture
- Daily schedule provides planned eating and bathroom times
- Teachers use assessment tools to inform and guide their practice

## **Communication, Language & Literacy**

### **A. *Receptive/Listening:***

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Actively participates in conversations
- Understands and follows verbal directions
- Attentively listens at story time

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Teachers engage children in frequent conversation about their experiences and their work
- Teachers ask open-ended questions and give ample time for children to respond
- Teachers play games that involve following directions
- Teachers give multi-step directions, reviewing the sequence of steps before the children begin an activity or transition
- Teachers model attentive listening
- Teachers read to children in large and small groups daily
- Teachers verbally describe children's play
- Teachers provide children opportunities to listen to a variety of music
- Teachers adjust educational strategies for multiple language learners

### **B. *Expressive/Speaking:***

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Recites poems and sings songs
- Expresses themselves using sentences
- Expresses feelings, needs and ideas to others
- Actively participates in conversations

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)



- Teachers engage the children in simple rhymes, songs and flannel stories
- Teachers provide opportunities to act out stories and songs with dialogue and actions
- Teachers provide hands-on experiences to build vocabulary and give children new concepts to explore and discuss
- Teachers encourage children to talk with their peers
- Teachers engage children in frequent conversation about their experiences and their work
- Teachers provide guidance and the words when children struggle to express their own thoughts
- Teachers verbally describe children's play
- Teachers adjust educational strategies for multiple language learners

### C. **Literacy**

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Shows an interest in books and stories
- Tells own stories (with a beginning, middle and end)
- Understands that print carries meaning
- Can answer simple questions after hearing a story
- Recognizes most/all uppercase letters
- Recognizes own first name
- Produces legible letters
- Writes first name
- Uses resources to spell words

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Teachers provide a variety of books and literacy materials
- Teachers provide reading and/or writing materials that enrich children's play in a variety of areas in the classroom
- Teachers read and reread to children in both large group and small group settings
- Teachers point out print and letters within the environment
- Teachers model the use of informational books and text features (charts, photos, graphs, definitions, diagrams, etc.) to learn about a topic of interest
- Teachers ask open-ended questions while reading/storytelling
- Teachers encourage children to write their name on their work
- Teachers provide a print-rich environment
- Teachers provide children opportunities to tell stories and/or create books individually or in groups
- Teachers model writing
- Teachers provide opportunities for children to learn letter sounds
- Teachers write and read dictation from children

## **Cognitive Development**

### **A. Approaches to Learning**

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range

- Is curious about the world around them
- Uses a variety of materials
- Respects and cares for classroom environment and materials
- Shows persistence in completing a task/activity
- Demonstrates self-direction/independence
- Participates in simple group activities
- Initiates or joins in play with other children
- Plays cooperatively with other children

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Teachers provide opportunities for observation and discovery, both indoors and outdoors
- Teachers provide a wide variety of materials
- Teachers model how to use and care for the materials
- Teachers model and expect children to follow a set of established classroom rules
- Teachers scaffold children's learning, giving them choices and suggestions when attempting to complete a task
- Teachers give children an opportunity to make choices and take charge of their learning
- Teachers plan, implement, model and participate in simple group activities
- Teachers help children join into play with others
- Teachers foster cooperation through modeling, participating and facilitating

### **B. Representation & Symbolic Thinking**

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Represents ideas with different medias
- Takes on pretend roles
- Makes believe with objects
- Uses complex scenarios in play

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Teachers provide a variety of foundational materials in interest areas
- Teachers provide open-ended materials based on the children's interests
- Teachers model the use of materials and props in make-believe play
- Teachers encourage children to return to play themes

### **C. Mathematical Thinking:**

Description of what we expect to see developmentally in this age range:

- Is able to sort, measure and seriate
- Is able to compare and construct objects
- Recognizes patterns and can repeat them
- Recognizes most/all numerals 1-10
- Counts 10 or more objects
- Shows awareness of daily time concepts

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Teachers provide a variety of materials that can be sorted, measured, seriated, patterned and counted
- Teachers provide materials for building and designing
- Teachers create and follow a predictable and consistent classroom routine and hang a picture schedule at child's level
- Teachers use books, finger plays, flannels and songs that feature mathematical concepts
- Teachers encourage children to use mathematical vocabulary

***While the following items are not included in our assessments of children, we believe they are an integral part to the development and experiences of children in our care. As such, they are included here as an addendum to our curriculum framework.***

#### **Visual Arts:**

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Teachers offer a wide variety of 2-D & 3-D materials
- Teachers read and provide art books
- Teachers facilitate art in a multitude of areas throughout the Center
- Teachers network with the UWM Art Department
- Teachers display children's work
- Teachers encourage children to reflect upon their work and the work of others
- Teachers introduce art concepts through books, activities and displays

#### **Music**

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Teachers provide opportunities to listen to a variety of music
- Daily routines include opportunities for singing and music
- Teachers provide opportunities to play musical instruments
- Teachers give children opportunities to express ideas and thoughts about music
- Teachers introduce music vocabulary through books & activities

#### **Creative Movement**

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Teachers provide a variety of opportunities for creative movement

- Teachers provide props to enhance movement
- Teachers plan and implement movement activities
- Teachers encourage children to describe their specific actions, movements and/or feelings

### **Social Studies**

- **Family**

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Examples of many people are represented in the classroom
- Teachers invite families to share information about themselves

- **Community**

Ways we support this in the classroom (specific activities, experiences, curriculum, etc.)

- Families are encouraged to share their culture and experiences with us
- We take walks throughout the Center
- We venture into the community on walks; e.g., Downer Woods, UWM campus, neighborhood schools, etc.
- We participate in field trips throughout the year
- We have a partnership with the Urban Ecology Center
- We invite different members of the community to come and share their expertise (e.g., police officers, dance groups, musicians, health and safety performers, etc.)

Sources:

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