



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:

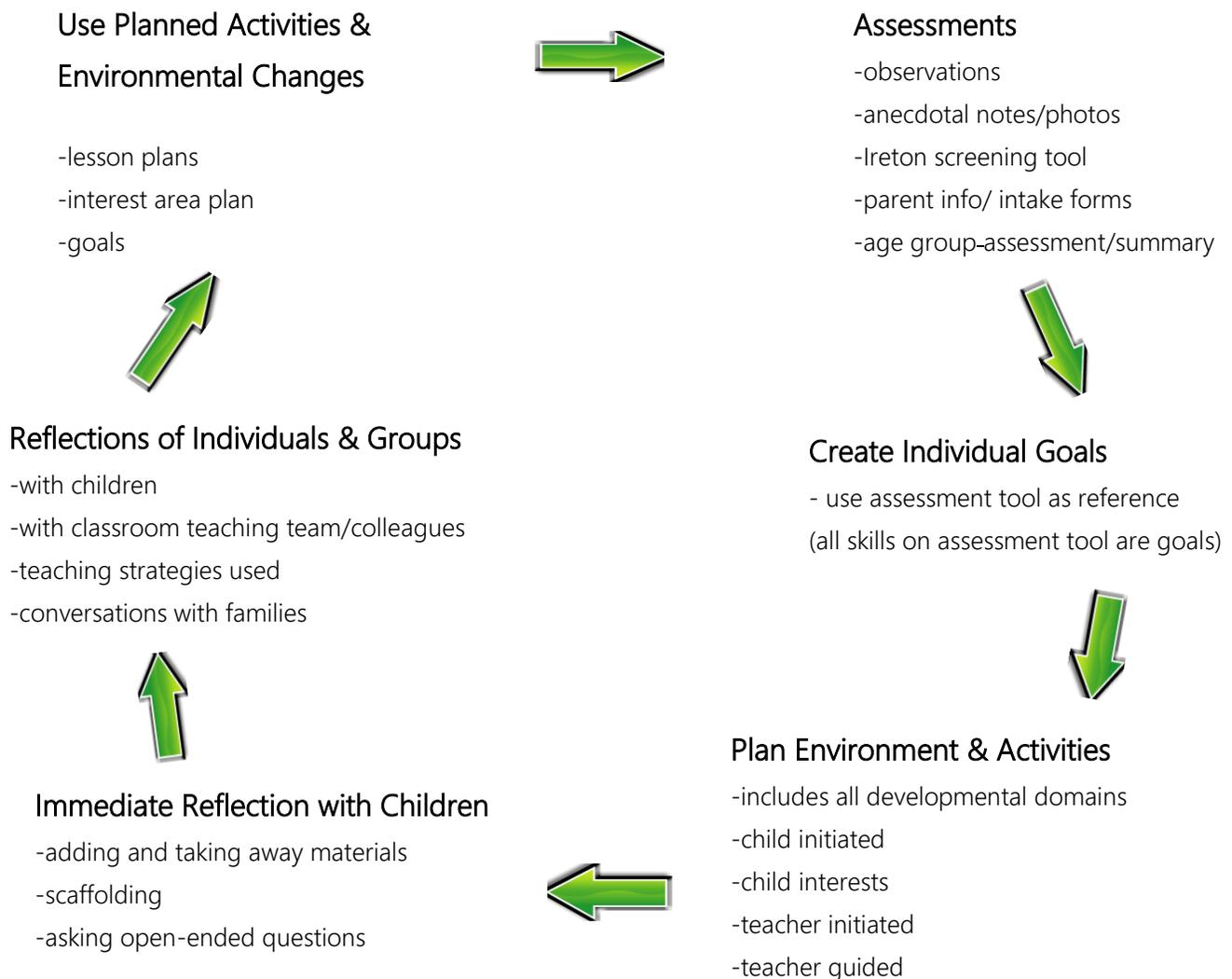
- Trusting, respectful, nurturing relationships between children and adults are essential. These caring bonds build the foundation for a classroom environment where children can take risks, learn from their mistakes and be joyful in their learning.
- The teacher's role is as a facilitator and guide. 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

Toddler Curriculum Guide

The toddler 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.

In this guide, we highlight developmental milestones and provide some examples of experiences. 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 scaffold learning in order to meet these learning 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, and Educaring for Infants 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 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 toddler program so that children have many opportunities to learn, practice and gain these skills.

Toddler Curriculum Framework

Social, Emotional, and Regulatory Development

A. Social Development

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

- Recognizes and acknowledges people coming and going
- Takes comfort with familiar adults
- Shows awareness and interest in peers; begins to recognize similarities and differences
- Participates in/initiates play with other children (parallel, cooperative, small group)
- Asserts needs and wants
- Is able to solve conflicts or problems with a teacher's assistance (leading to beginning conflict resolution skills)
- Attempts to govern others' behavior
- Aware of role within family and community
- Recognizes differences among families and people within the classroom and broader community

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

- Children are given language to work through their interpersonal conflicts as needed
- Teachers provide a variety of activities where children can play alongside one another as well as interact
- We keep the same teachers in the same classrooms as often as possible to allow for strong relationships between teacher and child
- Teachers will name people who enter the room so that children are able to recognize and be comfortable with others
- A variety of literature is available in classrooms that depict different ethnicities, abilities, family structures, etc.
- Family photos of children in classroom are displayed at child level

B. Emotional Development

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

- Displays a variety of emotions
- Uses nonverbal and verbal communication to express emotion
- Exhibits positive self-concept and confidence in abilities
- Shows awareness of being part of a family and larger community
- Recognizes others' feelings and then displays empathy
- Is able to express emotions verbally

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

- Teachers use descriptive language to label emotions as they happen in the classroom
- Children are given the language to describe their own emotions as they happen

- Based on developmental level, children will be expected to do more and more for themselves (dress self, clean up toys, put away lunch, etc.)
- Children are often given choices to encourage autonomy in decision making
- Teachers will scaffold as needed to encourage gradual mastering of tasks, helping children work through frustrating attempts at autonomy
- Classrooms may have a family board that includes pictures of children with their respective families
- Classrooms may have a book or posted photos displaying community landmarks
- Children explore outside the Children’s Learning Center by taking walks around campus

C. Regulatory

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

- Begins developing own patterns for sleeping, eating, and other basic needs
- Can calm self when upset
- Chooses activities and follows through on choices for extended periods of time
- Moves through daily transitions smoothly
- Demonstrates the ability to delay gratification
- Demonstrates self-direction/independence
- Respects and cares for classroom environment and materials
- Shows ability to adjust to new routines/situations
- Responds to verbal redirection
- Is able to follow classroom safety rules with minimal direction
- Is able to follow classroom routines with minimal direction
- Follows directions, occasionally testing limits (leading to no longer testing limits)
- Has the self-control to follow safety rules

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

- Model safe classroom behavior and set clear rules and expectations:
 - Involve children in this process
 - Discuss how your actions affect other in large groups and individually
 - Post ‘house rules’ with pictures whenever possible
- Create and follow a predictable and consistent classroom routine that is easy for children to follow:
 - Have ongoing conversations with children about the routine, what just happened and what comes next
 - Create picture schedules to hang at child level
 - Discuss overall plan for the day throughout the day
 - Give children sufficient warning and explanation when the routine needs to change (ex. “Guess what, the gym is closed! We are going to need to make a new plan! Let’s make a plan for the rest of the morning!”)
- Teachers use their observations and knowledge of individual children to support their developing patterns for eating and sleeping
- Teachers give children options as well as appropriate language to support their understanding of moving through daily routines and interpersonal

communication, such as "Would you like to come to the bathroom now or in 2 minutes?" Or "It is time to clean up, would you like to put away the blue car or the red car?" Or "It looks like she was playing with that; would you like to ask if you can have a turn when she is finished?"

- Teachers involve children in routines such as choosing materials and cleaning up
- Children are given ample time in the classroom to play with materials, allowing them to fully explore and experience their choices

Physical Development

A. Self Help

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

- Dressing and undressing with help
- Can sit in an open chair without falling over
- Feeds self with utensils, spilling little
- Pours liquids into a cup
- Drinks from an open cup
- Actively participates in nap time routine; is able to fall asleep with minimal help from teachers.
- Is beginning to use bathroom on his/her own
- Sets up/cleans up meals and snacks
- Takes responsibility for personal hygiene (wipes nose, washes hands, etc.)

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

- Encourage independence:
 - Provide children with utensils, open cups, and pitchers and encourage their use
 - Model set up/clean-up of meals; gradually expect participation and autonomy
 - Provide time and help for children to dress/undress themselves (example: putting on winter gear to go outside, putting on/taking off shoes). Break this up into small manageable steps based on the child's development.
 - Provide time and help for children to clean up materials after they are done using them. Break this up into small manageable steps based on the child's development.
- Encourage children to be responsible for their own health/personal hygiene by:
 - Creating easy-to-follow steps for handwashing (include pictures whenever possible)
 - Involve children in planning and making healthy snacks
 - Provide plenty of time for large motor activities and exercise
 - Encourage healthy habits that are done outside of school (doctor/dentist visits, tooth-brushing, healthy bedtime routines). Discuss these things in large/small groups drawing from personal experiences and using books, songs, finger plays, etc.

B. Large Motor Development

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

- Demonstrates basic loco-motor skills (walking, running, jumping, climbing)
- Beginning to gallop
- Kicks a ball
- Attempts to skip
- Stands on one foot without support (for several seconds)
- Hops on one foot
- Beginning to develop coordination/balance
- Walks up and down stairs
- Walks up and down stairs alternating feet
- Pedals a tricycle
- Throws objects
- Catches balls/objects
- Exhibits increasing physical endurance
- Jumps with two feet at the same time

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

- Using gym and play yard time for free running, jumping
- Games that encourage movement (Little White Ponies, Follow the Leader, obstacle courses, songs with motion words, balance beams, hop between rubber dots)
- Provide bikes/trikes of varying difficulties
- Balls in gyms and on play yards
- Using the stairs to transition between areas rather than the elevator
- Lofts in classrooms/gyms support climbing & walking up/down steps

C. Fine Motor Development

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

- Building of hand-eye coordination
 - Picks up small objects easily
 - Works with small manipulative materials to increase strength and coordination
- Holds objects with fingers instead of fist
- Uses writing tools to draw on paper
- Snips paper with scissors
- Scribbles in a circular motion
- Imitates horizontal writing motion
- Draws a circle
- Scooping and pouring of sensory materials
- Stacking blocks

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

- Provide varied utensils for writing at child level- markers, crayons, pencils, paper
- Open-ended art experiences (finger-painting, holding brushes, using non-traditional items to paint)

- Offer sensory experiences that promote using fingers to manipulate (playdoh, goop, moon sand, rice)
- Small manipulatives available for children to explore on their own (counters, Duplos, stringing beads, pegs)
- As abilities progress, teachers offer more challenging opportunities (using tweezers, spoons, small shovels to pick up items rather than fingers)
- Teachers can facilitate new ways of using materials (drawing shapes in sand with fingers, painting with water on sidewalks)
- Classrooms provide a variety of blocks and manipulatives to build/stack

Communication, Language, and Literacy

A. Receptive/Listening

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

- Follows single and multistep instructions
- Answers questions appropriately
- Derives meaning from others' communication and environmental sounds (e.g., comments when a child cries)

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

- Teachers consistently describe their actions and daily activities as they are happening.
- Teachers respond to children's questions appropriately as needed, giving children the words to answer one another's questions as needed
- Teachers give instruction in the form of conversation or direction, not as a question - this guides children to follow directions
- Teachers facilitate conversations between children based on what they are engaged in in the moment
- As developmentally appropriate, teachers provide instructions with increasing complexity
- Teachers model appropriate communication and conversation while in the presence of children

B. Expressive/Speaking

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

- Uses gestures, sounds, and single words/multiword sentences to label objects and communicate/express needs, wants and ideas
- Participates in and initiates conversations that last for two or more turns
- Narrates events as they are happening
- Talks to others about personal experiences
- Engages in short stories, finger plays and songs

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

- Teachers will narrate what they are doing throughout the day (diapering, making lunches, narrating their own 'play')
- Teachers encourage discussion and conversations amongst children during lunch and snack times. Teachers may prompt with questions that require reflection on

the part of the child - "What did you like about the play yard today?" "Where did you go this weekend? What was your favorite part?" "Tell me about what's in your lunch today?"

- Teachers engage in conversations with children throughout the day, modeling responding to questions, then following with a question of their own to encourage back-and-forth communication.
- Teachers allow opportunity for repetition of books, stories, songs, flannels to give children the chance to master content and participate successfully. When children struggle to express their own thoughts, teachers will give children the words to use to do so; also will ask clarifying questions to children
- During art activities, teachers might ask children to narrate/describe what they are doing, and record what the child says

C. Literacy

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

- Uses writing and drawing tools to make a variety of marks on paper (eventually used to represent ideas/words)
- Shows an interest in books/stories
- Understands the mechanics of a book (holds book upright, turns pages from right to left)
- Recognizes differences between print and illustrations
- Beginning to recognize and identify letters
- Can retell a story in sequential order

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

- Provide varied utensils for writing at child level - markers, crayons, pencils, paper
- Teachers keep a constant, rotating supply of a variety of books for children to experience (paperback, board books, big books, books on CD)
- Teachers re-read stories many times, exposing children to story structure. Teachers will ask questions such as "What happened next?" to encourage expanding upon stories.
- There is time built into each day for teacher-led book readings as well as time built in for children to explore books at their own pace. Children will view adults' proper handling of books
- Books are available and at child level
- Time is built into the day for flannels/songs. Flannels allow children to experience storytelling in another format.
- Puzzles and matching games with letters may be available in classrooms
- Shelves and some room fixtures are labeled with print

Cognitive Development

A. Approaches to Learning

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

- Uses a variety of learning strategies/styles to understand new information (trial and error, verbal, kinesthetic, etc.)

- Is willing to try new activities with encouragement from teacher/other children
- Verbalizes own interpretations of things that occur around them
- Continues an activity until goal is reached (persistence)
- Begins to investigate causes when something unexpected happens
- Engages in an activity for a prolonged period of time (attention span)

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

- Classroom schedules/routines are set up so that children have long stretches of time in which to play
- Teachers observe children for mastery of skills and introduce more challenging toys/experiences as needed

B. Representational and Symbolic Thinking

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

- Uses objects in pretend play as they are used in real life
- Uses real and imaginary objects in pretend play
- Engages in pretend play; acts out simple scenarios (making dinner, talking on the phone)
- Uses words to express ideas and thoughts about dramatic play as it is happening (talks about role, etc.)
- Participates as an audience member in dramatic performances (as provided)

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

- Dramatic play centers include a variety of materials that are rotated based on children's interests. Materials include toy-like materials as well as real-life materials
- Teachers encourage expansion of children's play while taking on new roles, offering language to describe their play
- Classroom areas are set up with a variety of real and play objects, allowing children to use their imagination in determining how items are played with
- Children are encouraged to use toys and materials in unconventional ways (e.g. using a plate as a steering wheel, or a spatula as a microphone, etc.)

C. Mathematical Thinking

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

- Is able to rote count
- Counts using one-to-one correlation
- Recognizes and identifies basic shapes
- Uses positional (top, bottom, below, under, next to) and measurement (long, short, heavy, light, big, small) words
- Matches like objects and is able to sort by one or more attribute
- Beginning to understand time concepts
- Can start to recognize simple patterns

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

- Children are exposed to various materials that display multiple attributes, allowing children to sort/match toys while they are playing

- Teachers demonstrate use of language describing objects while playing with or near children
- Teachers demonstrate rote counting often, even in non-play situations such as counting boots, counting children, counting lunch boxes as they are set out, counting items seen in a book
- Some flannel stories are purposeful in their use of color/shape/size
- Letter, shape, number puzzles may be available for children
- Letter, shape, number magnets may be available for children
- Classrooms utilize a consistent routine, allowing children to begin to understand order of events (time concepts). Teachers use time-specific words such as later, before, tomorrow, yesterday, soon, etc.

D. Scientific Thinking

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

- Has exposure to and takes interest in the outdoor environment
- Uses words to describe things seen in nature
- Explores cause and effect
- Creates meaning using a variety of strategies
- Generates ideas and suggestions/makes plans and predictions when asked
- Ask questions, seeks information, and tests out possibilities
- Formulates conclusions based on observations, experiences and trial and error
- Recognizes and names colors
- Asks questions, seeks information, tests out possibilities

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

- Children are encouraged to explore plants and natural objects on our playgrounds. Teachers can talk about the different kinds of plants/animals seen outside, and explore the rocks/pinecones/water/sand that are all present on all playgrounds.
- Children can go on buggy walks around campus and to Downer Woods to explore nature.
- Sensory table is used regularly; can be filled with water, rice, play-doh, snow. Different materials are added (scoops, bowls, balls, animals, yarn, funnels, eye droppers, rocks, water wheels, ice cubes, food coloring, etc.) to allow children to explore cause and effect while playing in sensory tables.
- When unexpected things occur (water/milk spills, block tower falls, etc.) teachers ask probing questions to help child investigate, rather than become upset or have a negative reaction
- Children can use paint, colored water, or different colors of playdoh to experience mixing colors and creating new ones
- Teachers encourage children to make predictions about what will happen next when reading stories, singing flannels, or experimenting with materials in a sensory table

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.

E. Visual Art

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

- Shows an interest in art and art experiences
- Uses words to express ideas and thoughts about art
- Actively participates in art experiences provided (using a variety of materials and tools)
- Uses visual arts to express ideas or thoughts
- May begin to draw representationally

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

- Children are given the opportunity to explore various art materials and tools such as paint, pencils, crayons, etc. on a regular basis
- Teachers will allow children to use these materials in their own way, as long as it is safe
- When age appropriate, teachers will dictate a child's description of their work and record this description, giving language to their experience
- Children's art is hung at their level, often with pictures of the activity as it happened, giving children the opportunity to reflect on their own work
- Classrooms will rotate in books that depict famous works of art/artists, allowing for discussion

F. Music

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

- Shows an interest in songs and finger plays
- Uses a variety of musical instruments
- Begins to recognize patterns in rhythm
- Shows an awareness of music in the classroom environment
- Uses words to express ideas and thoughts about music

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

- Time is set aside throughout the day for children to participate in songs and flannel stories. Classrooms have a variety to choose from, and allow repetition of these so that children become familiar with and participate in singing them. Teachers can introduce clapping along with songs/flannels to highlight the rhythm of music.
- Musical instruments are available in classrooms, in gyms and on play yards
- A variety of music is played in the classrooms as well as gyms
- Teachers respond to children's requests for specific songs to be repeated

G. Dance

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

- Moves body to music in a variety of ways
- Uses props (such as scarves) to move to music
- Participates as an audience member in dance performances (as provided)
- Uses words to express ideas and thoughts about dance (their own or others)

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

- Children are exposed to a range of musical styles through CDs and songs
- Schedule ample time for free-range movement
- Provide props such as scarves, ribbons, pompoms, etc. in classrooms, gyms, and playgrounds. Encourage children to move freely to music while using props

Sources:

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