



# 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

### Use Planned Activities & Environmental Changes

- lesson plans
- interest area plan
- goals



### Assessments

- observations
- anecdotal notes/photos
- Ireton screening tool
- parent info/ intake forms
- age group-assessment/summary



### Create Individual Goals

- use assessment tool as reference  
(all skills on assessment tool are goals)



### Plan Environment & Activities

- includes all developmental domains
- child initiated
- child interests
- teacher initiated
- teacher guided



### Reflections of Individuals & Groups

- with children
- with classroom teaching team/colleagues
- teaching strategies used
- conversations with families



### Immediate Reflection with Children

- adding and taking away materials
- scaffolding
- asking open-ended questions

# **UWM Children’s Learning Center**

## **Kindergarten Curriculum Guide**

The kindergarten program uses an emergent curriculum, where topics of interests of the children’s and teachers’ observations continue to guide the learning and discovery. UWM Children’s Learning Center uses a whole child approach when thinking about children, knowing that all areas of development deserve awareness and nurturing, while valuing the knowledge that our children and families bring with them to our Center. Our curriculum is play-based and includes hands-on opportunities with real-world materials. This approach makes full use of our children’s intrinsic motivation to engage, learn and wonder. Additionally, this perspective creates a positive early-learning experience, where a strength-based lens builds relationships and promotes confidence, curiosity, and creativity in learning and discovery.

Our kindergarten teachers use the following learning principles in planning, meeting children’s needs, abilities and interests, and when observing and reflecting upon experiences.

- Learning happens through play, relationships and many different languages.
- Children are capable of co-constructing their own learning.
- Children learn about the world through interactions.
- A child’s environment is their third teacher.
- Adults are children’s guides in learning.
- Reflection and documentation are an ongoing process for both children and teachers.

While early academic skills are planned for and developed in our kindergarten, social-emotional development is at the heart of our kindergarten curriculum. All learning experiences stem from relationships and a supportive community. In this way, social and emotional skills and growth are the driving force behind all experiences in our kindergarten program.

In this guide, we highlight developmental milestones and provide ways that we support these goals. We consider that children grow and develop at different rates. We also understand that children will need different types of support and scaffolded learning in order to meet their needs and goals. We use the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Guiding Principles in our practice. These principles reflect the knowledge based in research while emphasizing our commitment to the values and strengths of our children and families. We also draw from additional pedagogies including Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and High Scope, as well as anti-bias and social justice-driven standards from both NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) and Learning for Justice. These ideas create an intentional lens on guiding our ideas, play, work and relationships.

Our kindergarten program looks at each child holistically, using the five areas of development as specified by the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards to guide our planning, implementing and reflecting on learning experiences. These areas include approaches to learning, social and emotional development, cognition and general knowledge, language development and communication, and health and physical development

The learning standards that support growth in these five areas are important as they provide a framework for developmentally appropriate expectations for young children. Additionally, these standards help guide the creation, evaluation and improvement of an environment necessary for optimal development.

While identified separately in this guide, all areas of development overlap and learning takes place in multiple domains simultaneously. Skills and strategies are never 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 and experiences.

### **Approaches to Learning**

We view our approaches to learning as supporting the development of skills and behaviors that children use to engage in their own learning.

Play - Our kindergarten program implements play-based learning for attention to and growth in all areas of development. Play helps children develop imagination and deep knowledge, through relationships and through information. In addition, play promotes learning through a strength-based perspective, where children are recognized for the information and cultural wealth they bring to experiences.

Emergent Curriculum - Teachers plan activities and projects based on the specific group of children they are working with, considering their skills, needs and interests. In an emergent curriculum program, what happens in side-by-side classrooms will look different because of the varying skills, interests and needs of the children within those classrooms. When planning, the teacher takes into account all that they know about individuals and the particular group of children they teach.

### **Social and Emotional Development**

We understand that young children learn best through caring relationships with their teachers and peers, and meaningful hands-on experiences. Social and emotional well-being and skill development is foundational to our kindergarten classrooms. In this way we work to meet the needs of each child. We recognize that developing self-esteem, self-image, and empathy is essential to growth and development in all areas. Additionally, through our relationship-based approach, we work to build a strong classroom community, bringing with it a sense of belonging for all children and families in our care.

**Self-awareness** - an awareness of and confidence in meeting one's own needs. Understanding and taking responsibility for own well-being, expressing ourselves

**Self-management** - managing rules, routines and transitions, making good decisions

**Relationship building** - engaging with others, sharing interests

**Social awareness** - initiating and joining in, taking turns, initiating sharing, participating cooperatively and constructively, solving social problems, having an ability to look at situations differently

## **Cognitive and General Knowledge**

We consider intellectual development as working on the skills and processes that support learning. These skills include:

**Attending and engaging** - sustaining work on interesting tasks, ignoring distractions

**Solving problems** - solving problems by seeking out information, questioning and reasoning, and evaluating solutions

**Showing curiosity and motivation** - an eagerness to learn about a variety of ideas and topics

**Showing flexibility and inventiveness** - using creativity and imagination during play and routine tasks, changing plans if a better idea is proposed

**Recognizing and recalling** - talking about experiences in order, providing details, evaluating experiences

**Making connections** - drawing on everyday experiences and applying knowledge

**Thinking symbolically** - drawing, constructing and planning in order to identify and represent ideas

**Engaging in sociodramatic play** - acting out scenarios, interacting during pretend play, assigning and assuming roles, sustaining play

### **Reading**

K4:

Enjoying listening to stories read aloud and participates on discussions

Showing growth in vocabulary

Recognizing upper- and lower-case letters

Recognizing that letters have corresponding sounds

Recognizing own name and others' names in print

Knowing print moves from left to right and continues on the next line.

Pointing to words when reading a short, familiar book

K5: (in addition to K4 skills)

Matching consonant letters with their sounds

Pointing to each word when reading independently

Using strategies to read less-familiar texts, including illustrations, phonics, sight words and context

Understanding the function of periods, question marks and exclamation points

### **Writing**

K4:

Communicating with pictures and words to tell our own stories

Drawing and writing to convey meaning

Writing first name

Practicing writing letters with "kid spelling"

Using writing as part of our everyday lives

K5: (in addition to K4 skills)

Drawing pictures with characters and settings

Identifying consonant sounds throughout words when writing

Having a growing number of conventionally spelled words to use in writing

Using conventions of writing (punctuation, spaces between words, etc.)

## **Math**

K4:

Exploring and experimenting with math ideas through a variety of materials

Problem solving with charts, games, blocks, numbers and found objects

Concepts include counting, shapes, sorting, patterns, 1-1 correspondence, graphing, classifying

K5: (in addition to K4 skills)

Concepts include rote counting to 100, measuring, applying number combinations and mental number strategies, adding and subtracting within five

Representing math concepts on paper

## **Science**

Questioning and observing

Reading and researching

Experimenting and hypothesizing

Collecting and recording data

## **Art**

Enjoying the process of creating

Representing ideas in a unique way

Expressing themselves with materials

Learning to use art tools

Practicing creative problem solving

Developing a visual vocabulary and an appreciation of beauty

Working with our hands to develop eye-hand coordination

## **Language Development and Communication**

**Listening and understanding** - listening and participating, following directions and details, responding appropriately to vocabulary, statements, questions and stories

**Engaging with others** -telling stories and sharing in conversations and exchanges

**Connecting ideas** -expanding on ideas and sharing information

**Expressing themselves** - using complete sentences, having an expanding vocabulary, participating in conversations, sharing ideas and needs

## **Health and Physical Development**

Growth and skills developing in children's bodies, including their brains, muscles and senses.

Development of both large- and small-motor skills - from running, hopping and balancing to using fingers and hands with writing and drawing tools