FISHER’S CURRICULA

Our Fisher teachers are highly educated and demonstrate a tremendous level of competence and dedication. This year a focus of our work is asking our teachers to consider how their education and experience align with the curricula framework selected by Fisher. Fisher has a play-based, emergent curriculum with Project Approach to frame group learning experiences. Around Denver, there are numerous early education centers following various approaches: Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio Emilia inspired, Classical/Behaviorism, etc. All of these have supporting theory and/or research, offering respected early education practices. Creative Curriculum was selected by Fisher many years ago and C4L was adopted last year specifically for our PreK classrooms. While we aren’t bringing anything new to Fisher this year, we’re bringing a renewed focus back to these curricula. When we all begin using these curricula as a central resource to guide classroom practices, we’ll all benefit. By following the scope and sequence of these curricula:

1. Children’s experiences will flow with philosophy and trajectory of learning, regardless of who their teacher is or in which classroom they are enrolled.
2. Teachers will have reliable resources to reference and guide them in DAP as conceived by a common group of theorists, as applicable to their age group.
3. Parents will see more consistency in our work and feel assured that their child’s education is following these research-based practices.

21ST CENTURY LEARNING SKILLS

These curricula and our approach are in line with the 4 Cs of 21st Century Learning Skills: communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking. These skills have been identified as critical for success in our future work force. We’re preparing children for jobs that don’t yet exist. Communication and collaboration require a high level of emotional intelligence and skill in constructively expressing your needs and perspective in a way that can be heard. Creativity and critical thinking require expansive time to explore and inquire in an appropriately stimulating environment with engaged teachers. We are working hard to instill these practices in all of our classrooms through the framework of our curriculum and the insightfulness of our teachers. I’ll go into some specifics about how our work is becoming more in line with that this year.

CURRICULUM FOCUS FOR 2019 - 2020

We have three focus points this year for curriculum and instruction: 1) Classroom Schedule, 2) Classroom Environments, and 3) Teacher-Child Interactions. In June, all teachers began this professional development with a concept called Yes! Environments. The 7 components of Yes! Environments are: 1) From a Child’s Perspective; 2) Teacher Triggers; 3) Dangerous & Destructive; 4) Watch & Wonder; 5) Honor the Child’s Lead; 6) Observe 7) Have Fun! Teachers have done a lot to reflect upon their classroom spaces and revising their schedules to support these concepts. And, we’ll continue this work throughout the year as teacher-child interactions become more apart of our coaching conversations. Below is a representation of the benefits of Yes! Environments side-by-side with the 21st Century Learning Skills, to demonstrate how many of the concepts align.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes! Environments</th>
<th>21st Century Learning Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Resilience and persistence</td>
<td>• Critical thinking – finding solutions to problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidence and independence</td>
<td>• Creativity – thinking outside the box</td>
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<td>• Resourcefulness</td>
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Creativity and inventiveness  
Curiosity and wonder  
Problem solving  
The ability to assess and make judgement about risk  

Collaboration – working with others  
Communication – talking to others

CENTER-WIDE CHANGES
Over the past 6 months, all classrooms have been thoughtfully recrafting their classroom daily schedules and environments to reflect the following criteria:

1. Reducing the number of transitions throughout the day and creating extended periods of uninterrupted exploration; offering a minimum of 1 hour of uninterrupted play time (once all children have arrived). Some positive results we’re noticing include:
   - children go to favorites first then begin to selected non-preferred activities
   - longer time to develop a purposeful plan for play which supports development of executive functioning skills and creativity (among the multitude of benefits)
   - minimize transitions which reduces behavior challenges and allows children to experience sustained engagement in an activity
2. During explore time (play time), children self-select what they’re interested in and can freely move these materials throughout the classroom. We’re working on creating classroom arrangements that support child-initiated and child-directed play. Additionally, the selection of materials will be within the children’s zone of proximal development; offering opportunities to engage in masterful play and stretch to the next skill level through careful observation and support from their teacher.

Age level departments have additional elements on which we’ve been focusing, specific to the unique needs of children in those classrooms. Please remember that several of our classrooms have children who, throughout the year, will change age level “classifications.” Our teachers are skillfully navigating these changing developmental and curricula needs.

INFANT CLASSROOMS

1. Primary Caregiving – this is a system of care in which 1 teacher has primary responsibility for the care of designated children. Primary Caregiving supports attachment between adult and child which serves as a catalyst for children feeling safe to explore and learn.
2. Responsive and Individualized care - teachers make an effort to create a predictable sequence of events while being responsive to the infants’ cues about what time these occur.
3. Increase curriculum through daily routines of diapering, napping and eating.

TODDLER & TWOS CLASSROOMS

1. Focus on process of learning (discovery) instead of product created.
2. Group size for learning experiences
   a. One-on-one learning
   b. Spontaneously developed small groups lead by children’s interests
   c. Limited large group learning. Whole group learning experiences are omitted from the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddler and Twos. We’ve linked the reasoning for this back to developmental skills in our child assessment system – TSG. Children of this age
don’t yet have the skills to wait their turn, contribute to conversations on topic, or reliably have sustained engagement in an activity – especially an activity they didn’t initiate.

3. Orchestrating transitions with a few children at a time and a continuous flow. This allows individual needs to be met, skills to be taught within the transition and reducing challenging behavior.

PRESCHOOL AND PREKINDERGARTEN

1. Some preschool and PreK classrooms are allowing children to choose when to eat morning snack/breakfast. Intentions behind this decision include: minimize adult imposed transitions; support children in learning to recognize when they’re hungry; instill healthy eating habits; and minimize challenging behavior.

2. Small group activities are being offered during explore time with 3-4 children at a time. Some benefits of this instructional design are:
   • teachers can more easily observe child’s process and skills
   • conversations in which children have multiple exchanges, think about probing questions, offer a response that is on topic and potentially connects to another person’s idea
   • children are able to enter and exit the lesson based on individual needs
   • teachers get direct and immediate feedback from children about engaging lesson designs and targeting each child’s developmental level to hold their interest

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION SUPPORT

Teachers are involved with a Curriculum and Instruction Support cycle that incorporates: training, classroom observations, action plans, feedback & coaching, and peer learning. This combination of support has been shown, through the work of Joyce and Showers, to have a 90% rate of transfer from theory to practice. Fisher has made a significant commitment to supporting teachers in this capacity. And, teachers are working diligently to be more intentional with curriculum and reflective about their practices. We appreciate the partnership with families in this process and value connecting children’s experiences at home with learning in the classroom. Please feel free to stop by Jill’s office (on the 2nd floor) to talk more with her about the curriculum and instruction efforts at Fisher.