

Girls Club of Greenfield

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CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

PURPOSE & PHILOSOPHY

The Girls Club of Greenfield believes that children learn best when they have a positive self-image and are accepted as they are by both adults and other children. By providing a rich environment, the child is given repeated opportunities to discover, explore and be challenged, thereby fostering independence, self-confidence, self-control, and a sense of responsibility.

We recognize the importance of partnering with parents and that the strong relationship between parent and child, teacher and parent, teacher and child, best supports children's learning. Our approach to creating curriculum is a comprehensive, whole-child approach that integrates nurturing, respectful relationships with learning domains that are interconnected and provides for culturally meaningful experiences. Curriculum planning takes into account the individual child and our assessment results inform our curriculum.

We recognize that essential to quality learning experiences for children are the quality and consistency of the staff that works with them. Our classrooms maintain (and sometimes exceed) required teacher to child ratios and each classroom has a primary group of teachers that are assigned to that group daily. This is to ensure high teaching standards, consistency and smooth transitions for children throughout the day. It also maintains continuity of relationships between staff and children and groups of children. For the Infant Room the ratio is 1 to 3; the Toddler Room is 1 to 4; the Preschool Room is 1 to 6; the School Age Room is 1:13. These ratios are maintained during all hours of operation both on site and off site, and staff are always within sight and sound of children. Classrooms are also provided with regular "floating" staff that provide planning and break support for assigned classroom teachers.

TRAINING

The Girls Club of Greenfield combines this philosophical approach with knowledge of and experience with child development, birth through six years of age. In addition to coursework and associated degrees, Infant/Toddler teachers receive training in the use of Early Learning Guidelines for Infant and Toddlers developed by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children (MAEYC) and Preschool teachers receive training in the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences, developed by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

CORE COMPETENCIES

These guidelines are used as a framework to help guide and facilitate children's learning and development with an established group of core competencies that align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and prepare children for their future learning in the public schools. Guidelines include the following domains for Infants and Toddlers:

- Social & Emotional Development
- Language Development
- Cognitive Development

- Physical Health and Wellbeing

The Infant/Toddler guidelines become the foundation for the Preschool Learning Guidelines and core competencies that include the following domains for Preschoolers:

- Health Education
- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- History and Social Science
- Health Education
- The Arts

THEMES & LESSON PLANS

Our curriculum planning incorporates all core competency areas within an established 12 month curriculum that includes the following themes for our Infants/Toddlers:

- All About Me, Community, Bodies, Opposites, Transportation, Numbers, Colors, Animals, Textures, Shapes and Sizes, Insects

The following themes are used in our Preschool Classrooms:

- Families, Community, Harvest, Health, Celebrations, Farms, Insects, Stories and Literacy, Winter, All About Me, The Senses, Transportation

Each teaching team of 2 to 3 teachers is responsible for creating weekly lesson plans based on the month's theme and the core competencies. Teacher-directed activities are done in small groupings or "target groups" to ensure individualized attention and access to all activities for all children in the classroom. Curriculum plans include opportunities for small group activities, teacher directed activities, and to a lesser extent, large group activities. Teachers use information gathered from parent intakes and while working with children and assessing children to learn about individual children's needs and interests when creating lesson plans. Lessons plans include the following:

Name of activity, description, materials needed, purpose and objective of activity, core area(s) targeted, individual adaptations;

Along with lesson plans, each classroom maintains a daily lesson and activity log that contains regular entries from classroom teachers about the day's activities and plans for adaptations, adjustments and individualization. These entries are read by all teachers and implemented daily. This companion log is also used for post lesson entries to address any observations about individuals to be used later for assessment.

CENTERS

In addition to daily lessons done in small groups or "target groups," each classroom is set up in discovery centers where children are self-directed, challenged and interactive with materials and each other. Centers are created with materials that foster social, emotional and cognitive development and include the following:

- Dramatic Play
- Building and Construction

- Sand & Water Play
- Book & Reading Area
- Puzzles and Manipulatives
- Arts Area
- Science Area

MEAL TIME

Meal times are regarded as an important part of our daily curriculum. Meals are served family style to encourage opportunities for development of self-help skills, manners and time for socialization. Teachers sit at tables with children to guide serving, eating, socialization and cleaning up. Teachers engage in open-ended conversations with children and encourage conversation among children.

OUTDOOR PLAY

An important element of our curriculum planning is Outdoor Play. Active play in a large, open area that includes various opportunities for practicing locomotor skills, balancing, and large muscle movements on various surfaces is critical to a child's healthy growth and development. Areas in which children engage include the following:

- Climbing structure, Sand Box, Pavement for riding toys, Large Open Area for group games, running/chase games

Outdoor play occurs daily, weather permitting. When outdoor play is not possible, indoor experiences such as movement games or dancing are incorporated into the day.

ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN

PURPOSE

The Girls Club of Greenfield recognizes the importance of observing and documenting children's growth and development in a systematic way that is accurate and comprehensive. We also understand that any assessment of children's skills and knowledge must be directly linked to the curriculum we provide. Curriculum and assessment have a reciprocal relationship and each informs the other. Having a quality assessment instrument that is developmentally appropriate, reliable and valid not only supports children's learning as individuals but must be sensitive to and aware of the values and experiences unique to each child and her/his family. Assessment is also essential to early intervention for infants and toddlers.

TOOLS & TRAINING

The Girls Club uses the High/Scope Child observation Record (COR) for Infants and Toddlers six weeks to 3 years old, and the High/Scope COR for Preschoolers, children 2.6 years to 6 years old. The Girls Club also uses Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) as a screening tool for infants through preschoolers.

COR is an observation-based assessment tool that is used to provide a useful and accurate picture of a child's development and abilities across a wide range of domains. Children are observed by all teachers in their classroom during a child's daily routine rather than removing the child from the classroom. Teachers systematically observe and record anecdotal evidence about a child, enter the information in a portfolio, assign a developmental level to an anecdote and fill out summary and report forms for parents.

The Infant/Toddler COR is composed of 28 items in the following 6 categories:

- Sense of Self
- Social Relations
- Creative Representation
- Movement
- Communication and Language
- Exploration and Early Language

The Preschool COR is composed of 32 items in the following 6 categories:

- Initiative
- Social Relations
- Creative Representation
- Movement and Music
- Language and Literacy
- Math and Science

Each teacher in each classroom receives training directly from High/Scope for the age group with which they are working. Training hours total 15 hours.

PROCEDURES

CORS are completed for each child every six months and a more informal developmental checklist is created for parents in between COR reports. Classroom teachers begin the process of observations and evidence gathering when a child is first enrolled. Parents are encouraged to participate in the assessment

process by being provided with an area for sharing observations from home on the reports. They are also invited to schedule a meeting to discuss progress reports with their child's Lead Teacher. Parents can expect the following schedule of reports and checklists (depending on when a child enrolls):

December/January	COR reports
March	Checklists
June	COR Reports
September	Checklists

ASQ SCREENING TOOL

The ASQ is a first level comprehensive screening and monitoring program. It identifies children one month to 5.5 years old who are in need of further assessment to determine whether early intervention or special education services may be required. ASQ is provided to parents within the first few weeks their child is enrolled. It is an important tool to engage parents in the process of assessing their child's abilities and developmental levels in partnership with the program. The ASQ comes with 30 questions in the following five areas:

- Communication; Gross Motor; Fine Motor; Problem Solving; and Personal-Social

Parent responses are tabulated and converted to point values. Then they are compared to an established screening cutoff point. Children's scores indicate that children are: developing appropriately; require close attention; or that further diagnostic assessment is recommended.

SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

As teachers gather information from their observations on children, areas or "gaps" in curriculum may be revealed. These will be items that have no supporting anecdotal evidence. Teachers will need to assess and adjust their own curriculum plan to address this missing information for the child or children. It could come in the form of an activity, a new material added to the room or even the creation of a new center.

REFERRAL PROCESS

When assessment tools and screening tools indicate that a child is developing below what is typical, a meeting is scheduled with the child's parents. At this time, the program's concerns are discussed and an individualized plan is created. If the needs of the child require specialized services, resource information is given to the parent/guardian.

We offer assistance to the child's parent/guardian in making the referral and we acquire written parental consent that allows collaboration and coordination of services, as well as written confirmation of confidentiality.

We follow up, with parent/guardian permission, by contacting the agency or service provider who evaluated the child for consultation and assistance in meeting the child's needs at the program. We document in the child's individual file, concerns and action taken on behalf of the child and obtaining the necessary parent/guardian consent. We are responsible for the follow up conducted with the child's parent, agency, service provider and additional steps if necessary.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Each summary report has a written statement of confidentiality. Children's records are filed in the office and maintained by administrative staff. The Lead Teacher, administrative staff and the child's parents may

have access to this information. With the parents' written permission, information is released to specifically named individuals.