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Older Preschool

Child Development Center

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**Part I: Background Knowledge**

1. **Developmental Level- General**

I am going to be working in the older preschool classroom at the Child Development Center at Keene State College. The ages range from four to five. There are seventeen children enrolled in the Child Development Center’s Older Preschool Class. The amount of children varies from day to day. The CDC offers a scheduling flexibility in which the children can enroll three days, two days, or five days a week. I am positive that the abilities and developmental milestones will vary. I will embrace each child on their individuality.

Preschoolers are extremely active; they are constantly running and jumping. Preschoolers embrace the opportunity to move their bodies in ways such as dancing, creative movement, role playing and being outdoors where they have the freedom to move their bodies in any such way they choose. “They should spend at least a quarter of their school day in physical activity. This is an age when much learning is transmitted through the large muscles, when learning goes from the hand to the head, not the other way around. (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.114)” The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that preschoolers get sixty minutes of active movement each day (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.117). This does not need to take place all at once; it can take place throughout the day. In conclusion preschoolers need to move and teachers need to plan movements to enhance preschoolers’ physical development. Preschoolers benefit most from hands on activities such as dramatizing stories, squeezing play dough, hanging from the jungle gym, building with blocks and getting messy with paint.

The development of basic movement takes place during the ages of two – seven. This is called the ‘fundamental’ movement phase (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p. 114). As each year progresses, the child’s coordination grows. Four and five year olds have greater control of their movements but, their movements are not yet fluid. Four year olds are often perceived as clumsy. They are often having spills and collisions. There is also a gender difference: girls tend to be more advanced within fine motor control and gross motor skills requiring precision, such as hopping and skipping; boys are generally more advanced in skills that require force and power such as running and jumping (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.114).

Children between the ages of three – five are experiencing physical growth; some children experience as much growth as six inches over this three year period. Growth during this time period takes place mostly in the torso and the legs. “On average, children gain five to six pounds and two to three inches per year from age three to six. (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.114)”

During the preschool years children move through a sequence to develop their gross motor skills; “The sequence is a product of physical maturation, instruction, and opportunity to practice the newly discovered skills. (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.116)” Fine motor development can begin to develop during the preschool years by giving preschoolers opportunities to practice. “But they do not attain any kind of sophisticated manual dexterity. (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.116)” )” Finger dexterity begins to develop as children enter preschool. Dexterity of the fingers is how children are able to use their hands. Children strengthen this through manipulating playdough, block building, beads, and lacing. Bilateral coordination is another area that preschoolers are developing. Bilateral coordination is when one hand holds the other and manipulates unscrewing a jar, clapping, holding a container, and putting objects in it. Bilateral coordination is also when both hands move actively such as putting cubes together, stringing beads, and linking links. Hand eye coordination begins to develop in the first few months of life. Hand eye coordination is the ability to reach for something and pick it up with accuracy.

Teachers can provide children with opportunities to develop their fine motor skills through planned experiences that children can explore such as stocking the writing center with scissors, pencils that are developmentally appropriate size (smaller ex. Golf pencils), crayons, etc… You can also provide children with substances that they can manipulate such as play dough, clay, paint, shaving cream, sand, and many other options. Children need opportunities to practice and learn new physical skills. Teachers need to plan specific learning experiences to aide children in their physical development. Learning experiences can include inside/outside activities, group games, small group games, individual movement stations, etc…all which support development.

Preschoolers’ social/emotional development is making tremendous strides during the ages three to five. They are forming relationships with others, understanding themselves better, and learning how to interpret their own feelings/emotions. During the preschool years, the children’s social development is growing. There are four categories mentioned in Developmentally Appropriate Practice that describe preschoolers social development; “(1) Children’s social interactions with adults and peers, (2) Development of prosocial behavior, (3) Aggression and other challenging behavior, and (4) Sense of self in relation to others (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.120).”

Preschoolers are becoming more aware of their social interactions. Preschools are much larger than most immediate families the children have. The children are much more aware and connected to their social interactions within preschool settings. Preschoolers generally form close relationships with their teachers; this in turn determines their success within school. Peer relationships are becoming more and more important during the ages of three – five. Preschoolers are most commonly participating in associative play, cooperative play, and on looker play. Associative play is when a group of children are playing together with no real goals set. Cooperative play happens later in the preschool years. There is typically a leader and there are rules and common goals between the groups. On looker play is when a child watches a group, and may even ask questions but makes no effort to join the play. Solitary and parallel play is evident at this age as well, but less common. Solitary play is when a child chooses a toy or activity that is different than the rest of the class; the child does this independently. Parallel play is when children play next to each other with similar toys but with no interaction. The play stages vary from child to child, day to day, but the most common is associative, cooperative, and on looker play.

During the ages three – six children are developing their prosocial behaviors. They become caring, they share, and they want to help others. Their cognitive development has developed enough at this stage where they can begin to understand the role of the other.

Aggression and other challenging behavior that was evident during the toddler’s years may be diminishing, however the expansion of cognitive development leads to ‘verbal bullying’; children’s vocabularies have expanded and they had began to use their words to hurt, such as ‘you cannot come to my birthday party’ (Copple, Bredekam, 2009, p.122). Verbal bullying is primarily seen at the end of the preschool years because the child’s language has advanced. Aggression does not completely go by the wayside. Aggression and other challenging behaviors need to be addressed early so that the behavior does not carryover and affect learning in the higher grades.

During the ages three-five children are gaining a better understanding of self. Preschoolers usually view themselves as ‘all or nothing’ (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.123); for instance, someone is either nice or mean, not anywhere in between. Self esteem begins to develop when the children are gaining a better understanding of themselves. Children at this age have a sense of themselves through an adults eyes, such as if an adult always tells them that they are a good writer they will think they are a good writer but maybe not a good dancer. They may be a good dancer just an adult has never complimented them on it.

Children during the preschool years are developing their understanding of their emotions; they are able to verbalize their emotions. Being able to verbalize their emotions helps them to better understand them. With the assistance of adults, children are able to sort through their emotions, learn coping strategies, and build resilience (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.123). Emotional development is separated into three categories (1) development of emotional competence, (2) development of conscience, and (3) stress, coping, and resilience.

“Preschoolers are able to express more complex social emotions such as pride, guilt, and shame and do so with a broader repertoire of facial expressions, gestures, words, and symbols. (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.123)” Preschoolers are able to describe their emotions and usually other’s emotions. Children’s school readiness depends on how children regulate their negative emotions. Children who are better able to express their negative emotions in acceptable ways are much more socially competent.

During the preschool years children are developing a conscience. They are internalizing values, morals, and expectations of behaviors. Children have a large understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Preschoolers are more aware of others. Children reflect the personalities of their parents; if their parents are kind and giving the child will reflect that, if the parent is aggressive and combative the child will reflect that (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p. 122).

Stress for children is much the same as adults, it comes about when a situation is more than we can handle. When a child or adult is stressed, they respond with their emotions, bodies, and behavior (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.125). Some of the stressors in children’s lives are divorce, hospitalization, and entering a new school (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p. 125). Some of the causes of distress for children could be the association of pretend and reality. Stress helps children to develop coping skills on how to deal with their emotions and how to regulate them; when a situation is more than they can handle. For that reason, not all stress is negative. However, long term stressors can result in long term developmental disabilities. Children need adults to help them develop a sense of how to regulate and deal with stress. Teachers can help children by creating a nurturing environment that promotes community building and individual recognition. This is done through making each child feel welcome, safe, and part of the community. Teachers lead through example, such as positive language and open ended discussions. Teachers can help children by reading books about feelings, leading group games, and discussions on feelings. Developing a relationship built on trust and respect will help children feel safe with you. This will bridge the result of children openly sharing with you their emotions.

During the preschool years cognitive development is ever growing. Children between the ages of four-five can develop scenarios such as you are the mom and you are the dad; they understand that they are acting out an imaginary scene. They are beginning to organize their ideas into categories. Through play, their use of symbols advances such as drawings. Children’s play takes on deeper depths such as a toddler may pretend to drink from a cup and preschooler may pretend to host a tea party (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.131). They are moving away from self centered play and moving towards involving others. “At age four-five children often collaborate with a peer or peers to create a scene with various roles and story lines. (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.131)”

Copple & Bredekamp (2009) found the following:

During pretend play children are practicing sustained attention, memory, logical reasoning, language and literacy skills, imagination, creativity, understanding of emotions, ability to reflect one’s own thinking, inhibit impulses, control ones behavior, and take on the role of the other. (p.132)

Each one of those skills takes time to develop and preschoolers should be given the opportunity to practice those skills. Teachers can support this through questions, cues and positive modeling. For example if a child is getting frustrated because they want to draw a picture of themselves and they ask you for help, instead of you drawing it for them you could ask them questions about themselves such as “Do you have a head? What shape is your head a square or a circle? Do you have legs? Are they a triangle or a line? What other body parts do you have? What shape do you think they should be? By forming a dialogue with the child you can help support his/her development. The role of the teacher is to support the development of children. This is done through learning what each individual child’s strengths and weaknesses are and discovering how each child learns best.

During the preschool years children’s language and literacy development is growing tremendously. Language development helps children to verbally express their emotions. Children who have more advanced vocabularies are better able to regulate their emotions. During the preschool years children are able to express their feelings, desires, ideas, and respond to those of others (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.142). Children often use language to express completions such as ‘I did it!’; as children mature this becomes less apparent. As children mature they develop private speech and they are able to plan ahead, control, and reflect their actions and behaviors.

Teachers are there to help children continue on the language and literacy continuum. Some children come from language abundant backgrounds and some do not. All children will benefit from conversations with adults and peers. Teachers need to take the time to give children their individual, sole attention. Teachers should follow a student’s lead and add responses that extend and enrich the conversation. Enhancing what the child has said helps the child to expand their meaning and linguistic learning. Conversations should be of experiences, events, and people that are beyond the here and now, such as events from the past and future, or the imagination (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.144). “Such conversations will aid the child in explanations, descriptions, narratives, and pretend talk. (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.145)” Teachers can expand children’s vocabulary in everyday conversation such as using larger words that they may not know but providing a brief explanation.

Teachers can expand vocabulary by reading high quality books aloud. Teachers should make a point to not only read aloud to the whole group but to individuals and small groups. This allows for more one on one time. Children would have more opportunity to choose books that pique their interest and more time to ask questions and participate in conversations. The classroom should be stocked with high quality books that are age appropriate and can peak the children’s interest in a specific subject. Books should be rotated to keep the children interested and on the continuous development of their literacy development.

A predictor of reading readiness is phonological awareness. That means noticing the sounds; beginning sounds rhythms, rhymes, other sound similarities, syllables, and phonemes. Children develop these skills through teacher led learning experiences such as rhyming games, singing songs, chanting rhymes, finger plays, and clapping out syllables to their names. Children can experience the written language through the classroom library and the writing center which should be stocked with a variety of materials that will provide the students with the opportunity to creatively express their knowledge and expand their knowledge of print. The children are constantly exposed to print such as charts, sign in sheets, name tags, and signs. During circle time or small group time, teachers might point out print and model reading from left to right pointing at each word.

For children to be ready to read they need to have a strong understanding of the alphabet and the sounds, be fluent in the language, have adult modeling of vocabulary and be read to everyday. Teachers can provide this in a variety of ways, such as anyone whose name starts with an A line up. In your classroom an alphabet chart should be displayed the children can refer to that when they are ready. Alphabet books can help children connect sounds with letters because of the picture letter connections. Invite children to say the name of the picture and letter, expanding into other objects that begin with that letter.

During the preschool years they are beginning writing in the scribble stage. Then they produce letter like forms, eventually recognizable letters, and developmentally spellings (Copple, Bredekamp, 2009, p.148). During the preschool years, being able to write is not a huge priority because that could lead to frustration. Providing the children with examples of print and ways to express their print is a priority. You can have them dictate a story to you; they can illustrate it. The children can witness your print and their story together, eventually making the connection.

During the preschool years teachers are providing children with meaningful learning experiences that promote their development. They are not forced activities because that could lead to frustration which could stall a child’s progress. Forming relationships with your students’ helps teachers reach each student on a personal level to know what they are interested in, aid in the planning process of learning experiences and build curriculum that is meaningful.

1. **Developmental Level – Class Composition**

“As advocates for social justice, we believe it is our professional responsibility to address (was confront) all forms of oppression and foster (was create) a caring and just community. Thus, anti-bias multicultural curriculum is central to our daily lives together at the Child Development Center” (CDC Family Handbook).

The Child Developmental Center at Keene State College consciously plans to be diverse within their classrooms. They accept people of all races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions not only as peers but as teachers and student workers. They strategically accept children based on the makeup of the class. The CDC wants to provide children with a developmentally appropriate diverse learning environment that children can flourish in. The CDC works with families to provide what is meaningful to each family; such as if one particular family celebrates Chinese New Year, the class may learn about it as well. This year at CDC there is only two children of divorce. One child the divorce is current as of this year. The other child has been dealing with the divorce of his parents for a few years.

Families of the CDC are all unique. Many children live with a mother and a father. Some live with a mother and see the father on occasion. A few have step mothers and fathers. Many of the children have brothers and sisters; some at the CDC. Children with step parents may also have step siblings. According to family surveys Grandparents and friends were listed but they did not reside in the house with the child for most of the families. Many children’s grandparents were and/or are in the children’s lives, they just do not live with them.

Four of the children are adopted, one from Guatemala, one from Ethiopia, one from China and one is a domestic adoption. The parents of the international adoptees embrace the child’s birth country and invite the culture into the home. For instance, one family celebrates many traditional Chinese holidays to support their child’s culture.

CDC does not restrict the celebration of holidays; it embraces the holidays of the families involved. The CDC sends out a questionnaire in the beginning of the year to ask families about their child, who lives in their house, who is involved in the child’s life but does not live with them, challenges, likes/dislikes, and holidays. After reading the class’s surveys I was able to see that many families celebrate the “traditional holidays” such as Easter, Christmas, Halloween, Thanksgiving, 4th of July, and Valentine’s Day. Some families celebrated 1st day of school, and family reunions. Families of adopted children celebrated adoption day, Chinese New Year, and other holidays specific to their culture.

Nine out of the sixteen family’s one parent works at Keene State College. That may be a professor, admissions office, and or the dinning commons. A couple other families work in the public school system as teachers and guidance counselors. Two parents work at Monadnock Family Services. Two fathers work in construction. A few families are business owners. One parent is a fitness instructor and one is an occupational therapist who teaches yoga to the children. One mother is an optometrist. The families are all unique and provide the children with the opportunity to learn about one and another.

The CDC has a nut free facility. This means that the children and the staff cannot bring any nut products in nor can they bring any products in that were not made in a nut free facility. One of the children in the OP classroom is allergic to peanuts. Since the CDC is a nut free facility, no special accommodations need to be made. One child is a vegetarian; he eats no meat products. Therefore, on the rare occasion that the CDC would serve meat, he would not be able to eat it and therefore, a special accommodation would be needed. The CDC has implemented the Early Sprouts Nutrition Program. This program introduces vegetables at an early age. The children are able to explore, taste, and cook with vegetables. They learn new ways to cook with them and many times they try what they have made.

**C. Content Knowledge – Background Knowledge for the Teacher**

The Older Preschool classroom at the Child Development Center practices an emergent curriculum. Emergent curriculum is child centered, it focuses on what is “socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to the children” (Jones and Nimmo, 1994). Adults are valuing their time spent with the children and respecting their ideas. They plan open ended activities that are responsive to the children’s interests. The curriculum is based on what the children are interested in. Stacey describes it as a negotiated curriculum. We bring something based on the NH Early Learning Guidelines and they bring the topic they are interested in. Not everything each child is interested in is possible to bring into the classroom. Topics must be safe, have resources available, and will inspire further interest in the topic.

In order to figure out what the children are interested in, I will need to be actively engaged during their play to learn what interests them. I will be taking anecdotal notes to help access where we should go. I can help inspire topics by provoking interests such as mentioning the flower I see growing outside the CDC. I could ask the children why the flower might be growing. What season is it? What happens in spring? What else happens during the spring time? All these questions will help the child to further their investigation of spring. I will be planning and implementing eight learning experiences based on the following development areas: social/emotional, physical, language, creative, cognitive, and health and safety development. I will be planning literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, art, blocks, sensory, and dramatic play lesson.

What Children Learn

“**Literacy**: vocabulary, language, phonological awareness, letters, words, print, comprehension, books, and other texts” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 125).

Ways to increase vocabulary and language: informal conversations with peers and adults, songs, rhymes, finger plays, movement activities, hearing new words to describe what they are doing, and read aloud.

Phonological awareness: songs, rhymes, and finger plays, are ways for children participate and understand phonological awareness. Preschoolers are demonstrating their knowledge when they are participating in songs, rhymes, and finger plays; when they make up silly or nonsense words they understand; when they are clapping syllables on each word, they are practicing their phonological awareness. Children are developing when they are able to determine the letter of a word by the sound.

Knowledge of print: print carries a message, each spoken word can be written down and read, print follows conventions (ex. Left to right, capital/lower case letters, punctuation), books have common characteristics (ex. Author, illustrator, front, back). Preschoolers demonstrate this when they point to a printed label and are able to determine that blocks go here. When they extend their dramatic play time and write, such as a grocery list or signs. They are developing when they are pretending to read to friends, parents, stuffed animals ect… they are holding the book, pointing to the words, reading from left to right.

Letters and words: Learning letters is more than being able to sing the ABC’s. It is being able to understand that a letter is a symbol representing one or more sounds. Those sounds are put together to make words and words have meaning. The most important letters for preschoolers are the ones in their names. They are beginning to recognize that my name starts with an ‘S’ so does the stop sign. Preschoolers demonstrate their understanding when they use letter materials to form their name, attempt to write a phone message in dramatic play, “say that was w, pointing to the first letter of each word in wishy washy” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 129)

Comprehension: understanding the meaning of spoken and written language. Children who understand will ask questions; make comments of the topic or story. How you are reading to children will aid in comprehension. Pause at the end of a sentence, ask open ended questions, and connect the topic to prior experiences.

“**Mathematics**: numbers, patterns, relationships, geometry, spatial awareness, measurement, data collection, organization, and representation” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 125).

Number Concepts

Children are developing their counting skills, one to one correspondence, quantity, comparisons, and number symbols. Counting can begin as early as age two. Rote counting is simply memorizations of a sequence numbers. One to one correspondence follows rote counting. It is linking one number with each set of objects. Quantity develops throughout. Preschoolers demonstrate this throughout the day such as “Can you bring me two cups” and the child brings you two cups indicating they have an understanding of quantity. A preschooler understands number order when they count a row from left to right; either way the number is still the same. When children understand making comparisons that are using language such as more than, bigger than, less than, and the same as. Young children can learn numbers without knowing the meaning. Understanding a number symbol means 5 = \*\*\*\*\*. Preschoolers demonstrate understanding of number concepts when they notice that it takes five scoops of sand to fill a cup, predict that it takes ten blocks to make a fence, then count to see it the prediction is correct, count five children and then set the table with five plates, napkins, and forks.

Patterns and Relationships

Patterns are arrangements of objects, shapes, or numbers. “Pattern recognition allows children to recognize relationships among objects and then to make generalizations about number combinations and to count” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 136). Preschoolers demonstrate understanding of patterns and relationships when they make patterns with cubes, sponge paint a border pattern, create and participate in clapping pattern games.

Geometry and Spatial Sense

Geometry sense is when children are recognizing shapes and structures in the environment. Children develop their understanding of two and three dimensional shapes when we give them the opportunity to explore with pattern blocks, draw, paint, and cut shapes. In the block area children are developing their understanding through matching blocks to block labels, creating patterns to create roads, or structures. The first step children learn to recognize simple geometry figures such as triangles, circles, and squares. They then learn the characteristics of shapes such as a triangle has three sides. They then begin to understand that a shape with four sides must be a rectangle or a three sided shape is a triangle. I will reinforce this by describing what I see. Children demonstrate their understanding of geometry and spatial sense when they use a geoboard to create geometric shapes with rubber bands, “say, you put your horse inside the fence. I’m going to make mine jump over the fence” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 137), note that bubbles look like round circles, and use empty boxes, tubes, and containers, to build imaginary things such as a playground.

Measurement

First children are making comparisons without any measurement tools. Then children learn to use nonstandard measurement tools such as a shoe, paper, and pencils. Formal instruction in measurement using standard units such as rulers, thermometers, scales, measuring cups comes later. Preschoolers demonstrate their understanding when they realize that there is only a short amount of time to play when the teacher turns over the sand timer, measure a table using a unit block, count how many cups of sand it takes to fill a bucket, and use a piece of string to measure a table.

Data Collection, Organization, and Representation

Involves sorting, classify, graphing, counting, measuring, and comparing. When children begin to collect, they sort usually without a formal plan. They may sort based on size, shape or color. As they develop their classifying skills they may sort based on two factors such as size and type of animal. Graphing is a visual of classifying. Preschoolers demonstrate their understanding when they sort a collection of shoes, making a graph of a sticker collection, make tally marks under yes/no board, and draw pictures of each object that floats.

“**Science**: the physical properties of objects, living things, and the earth and the environment” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p.125).

“Preschoolers learn science through exploring the world around them” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 142). They are busy manipulating, investigating, and asking questions. What preschoolers learn about science is determined by what they are interested in. You have to investigate what is most beneficial and meaningful to the children. Science will fall into three categories physical science, life science, and earth and the environment.

Physical Science

Through physical science children learn about materials, weight, shape, size, color, and temperature. Children are busy discovering how things move, such as when they build a car ramp in the block area and watch the car roll down the ramp. We know that children are developing physical science skills when they use a magnet to pick up metal objects buried in the sand table, tilt ramps to make cars go down, use pulleys, and be able to mix paint and articulate what happened.

Life Science

During life science discovery children learn about living things. Children are learning about life science when they are caring for plants and animals. Life science varies from area to area. Louisiana children might be learning about crayfish and Maine children might be learning about lobster; it varies from region to region. Preschool children demonstrate their knowledge of life science by noticing that the gerbil sleeps all day and mentioning or questioning if he sleeps at night, respond to ‘ cues such as watering a plant after leaves turn brown, and noticing that their hearts beat faster after dancing than it does after rest time.

Earth and the Environment

Through earth and the environment exploration the children are exploring their natural environment. They are developing an understanding and respect for it. Preschoolers are learning about the earth and the environment when they play shadow tag, talk about or depict in dramatic play routines that they follow during the day and night, add water to dirt to make mud pies, paint with water on sidewalk ,noticing it dries quickly in the sun versus the shade.

“**Social Studies**: how people live, work, get along with others, shape, and are shaped by their surroundings” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 125).

Spaces and Geography

Preschoolers are learning the characteristics of the place that they live. They are learning the similarities and differences of the characteristics of their home and someone else’s. Preschoolers can demonstrate this by playing board games and moving pieces in the right direction, molding wet sand to make mountains, hills, streams, determining how to navigate through an obstacle course, and use blocks to represent roads and buildings.

People and How Things Live

Preschoolers are discovering the commonalities of people and the diversity in people. They are determining their habitats and how that relates to others. They are studying their family structure and other family structures and how that relates to theirs. Preschoolers are demonstrating their knowledge of this area by talking about the family members that live in their house, describing what jobs their parents do, pointing out that their color is the same as a friends, use a toy cash register to sell shoes or create a cash register from blocks, and invite a child who is disabled in a wheel chair to play catch.

People and the Environment

People and the environment helps the children learn about how people in the environment affect the actual environment. Examples of this are community service people such as construction workers, recycling crews, and park rangers. During the preschool years, the children will be learning about their environment and community and how to preserve it. Preschoolers are demonstrating their understanding when they put trash in the rubbish can, understand that if we cut a tree down we will not have shade, and help to collect trash in the playground.

People and the Past

People and the past are about history. However, it is not about teaching about former presidents. It is about helping the children to understand and recall the things they have learned such as when they were babies they could not walk; now they can. Preschoolers are demonstrating an understanding of this when they hold up a baby shoe and say my foot used to be as small as this and now it is bigger, tell stories about a long time ago, and using a sand timer while taking turns.

“**The Arts**: dance, music, dramatic play, drawing and painting” (Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 125).

Dance

Through dance, preschoolers are using their bodies to express themselves. They are expressing ideas, respond to music and convey feelings. When asking children to move a different way to different music they are learning about how many different ways their bodies can move. Preschoolers can demonstrate this through using scarves and streamers to dance to music, imitate movements of animals after a visit to a farm or zoo, move quickly to fast music and slowly to slow music.

Music

Music is the combination of voice and/or instruments to create melodies and pleasing sounds. Children are learning about music through hearing various kinds. Providing students with the opportunity to explore instruments, make up songs, listen to music, and talking about sounds helps to form their appreciation of music. Preschoolers show that they are developing their understanding of music when they make different sounds with musical instruments, take part in musical games, create a song while pounding clay, and making the connection by saying this music makes me think of a parade.

Drama

Preschoolers are depicting drama through telling stories through action, dialogue or both. Providing materials such as clothes can extend the play such as in the block area children can add rugs to their homes with pieces of cloth. Preschoolers are demonstrating their drama skills when they gather materials and act out Peter and the Wolf in blocks and dramatic play, be able to depict someone who is happy, sad, mad, tired, excited, scared, and nervous, make up a puppet show for others to watch, ask “who am I” and pretend to be an elephant.

Visual Arts

Consists of painting, drawing, collages, modeling, sculpting, building, constructing puppets, weaving, and stitching, print making with stamps, blocks, and rubbings. Providing children with various materials aids in their discovery on how to express themselves. Visual arts promote an understanding of the world around them. The children could visit a local park and draw something that they saw, felt, smelled, and or heard. If they had a snack/picnic at the park you could encourage taste as well. Preschoolers are developing their understanding of visual arts when they create a collage after an author study such as Eric Carle, use various paint colors at an easel, try different objects to balance a mobile, and create a get well card for a friend.

Information for the subject areas was found from the following source: [Dodge, Colker, Heroman, 2008, p. 125-154]

**Part II: The Plan**

1. **Goals/Standards**

The goals for this unit align to the seven New Hampshire Early Learning Guidelines. The curriculum will foster opportunities for the children to:

Social/Emotional Development

* Develop a sense of self within the context of the group
* Develop self-help skills and a responsibility for self and others
* Develop age appropriate social behaviors

Cognitive Development

* Develop critical thinking skills such as problem solving, logical thinking, representation and symbolic thinking

Language Development

* Develop emergent reading and writing skills and understanding
* Develop age appropriate listening and speaking skills and understanding

Creative Development

* Develop children’s increasing ability to imagine, create, invent, express themselves and participate in an array of open-ended activities.

Physical Development

* Develop fine motor and large motor skills and coordination
* Continue sensory exploration of the environment

Health and Safety Development

* Develop a growing understanding of food and its effect on their bodies
* Increase children’s attention to their basic needs and their ability to keep their bodies healthy and safe.

[Goals and Objectives were found in the (Child Development Center Development Record Sheet)]

1. **Objectives**

Social/Emotional Development

Self-Concept: The children will learn a sense of self

Cognitive Development

Inquiry: The children will increase their ability to draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to formulate questions and hypotheses that support the development of mathematical, scientific, linguistic, and sociocultural concepts.

Communication and Literacy Development

Written expression: the children’s ability to make use of symbols including pictures, letters, and words to communicate.

Creative Development

Variety: children’s awareness and use of a range of materials and activities to express themselves.

Physical Development

Small Muscle Development and Coordination: children’s ability to use their eyes and hands together to accomplish tasks and solve problems.

Health and Safety Development

Self-Care: children’s attention to their basic needs.

**C. Unit Assessment Plan**

I will document the children’s learning through observations, photographs, and anecdotal note taking records. Observations of the children doing the learning experiences will be most likely what I am first inclined to do; however, I will then write down (anecdotal records, brief notes, checklists, and OP record sheets) what I observed during the learning experience. I will take photographs of the children during their learning experience times. I can then go back to those photographs to see if the children are meeting my objectives. Photographs cannot be the only form of documentation because I will need to know what the thought process was through children’s conversations about their work. I will take pictures so the child’s work is not harmed.

I began my time at CDC Older Preschool by sending out a family letter. I will send art work home with them that they created, and hopefully photographs. I will create displays within the classroom so parents and children can see their work. Pictures can be taken when something is not easily taken home, such as a block structure.

I will communicate verbally daily with my cooperating teacher Stacey Fortin about my learning experiences, daily routines, questions/comments/concerns, and the children. I will use seminar time to ask Stacey questions and ask her for advice on how to better the experience for the children. After the learning experience is complete I will share my findings with Stacey.

**D. Child Guidance Plan**

In order for children to develop naturally and flourish they need to be in a setting that is safe, warm and inviting. Children need to feel welcome in their home and away from home. In order to support children’s development I will provide the children with developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Providing children with various developmentally appropriate learning experiences that touch on the individual interests of the children encourages learning.

Mistaken behaviors will be handled in an appropriate way that encourages growth (2004 Gartrell). If the behavior is a group behavior I will conduct a group meeting where we discuss the behavior and we will come to a solution as a group. As a class we form our own community. I will put a strong emphasis on the fact that we all are part of the community and work together. If the mistaken behavior is a single child it will be handled in a private manner. The child will know that the behavior is not appropriate and I will let him and/ or her know what is appropriate. I will focus on logical consequences with the children. If a child is having trouble being safe when sitting on focus cushion they will not be able to use the focus cushion at that time. When conflict arises I first observe to see if the children can work out the problem together; if I am needed I will ask probing questions helping the children come to a solution on their own.

Each child will be welcome and their individual characteristics will be valued. We will encourage families and different cultures in my classroom; one way in particular is that children’s family photos will be hung up. This will help encourage diversity but still unifying us as one. Children will be guided to learn strategies on how to solve conflicts themselves. Each child will be respected and valued in my classroom. The children will have responsibilities/jobs such as line leader, door holder etc… this encourages belonging. I will be actively observing the children throughout the day; watching to see if I am needed to help support the children. This leads to the development of life skills.

**E. Planning Process**

Planning for preschool is even more flexible than planning for first grade. When I planned for first grade I knew each learning experience I wanted to do with the children. I learned that with first grade you can have learning experiences planned but do not expect them to get done every single day.

In preschool I focused more on what the children are interested in learning. For the past week the children have been reading stories about animals and acting out animals in circle. I realized that the children may get some creative expression and enjoyment out of a creative movement activity in which the children listen to music and the song dictates what animal to act like.

The next learning experience I am in the process of providing for the children is an open ended block play experience, where the children depict what they are have been learning about, Peter and the Wolf. They have been listening to the music and doing book walks. For my LEP, I will read the book to them and discuss their prior knowledge of the story. I will then invite the children to join me in the block area to listen to the music of Peter and the Wolf and create scenes.

I tried to listen to what the children are interested in because then I could connect that to a learning experience such as physical, social/emotional, literacy, safety/health, and cognitive development. Preschool is about developing these seven aspects. In the older grade yes you are still developing but you are focusing on the content. The planning process is ever changing for preschool and any classroom. A good plan is flexible and you are okay with adapting it. Sometimes plans do not go as planned. Were your objectives met? Why not? How can I make it better? These are questions I ask myself during and after the learning experience.

The CDC practices an emergent curriculum. The children learn through playing. Through play they discover. The learning experiences are open ended, child led instead of teacher led. The child determines the level of which he/she chooses to take that learning experience to. Such as when playing in the block area there are many materials for the children to explore with such as cars, people, and animals. Some children build with blocks flat on the ground, some build with five blocks; some build with eight and add other things. Block play is a developing process. The block area allows for each child to explore at their own level.

All plans and future plans in this classroom will be developed through observations of what the children will find meaningful and what aligns to the NH Early Learning Guidelines. Through observations of Stacey and Carol Russell I noticed that the children were very interested in animals. I then decided to incorporate a creative movement into morning meeting in which the children danced like animals. My next LEP was developed through cooperation of the CDC and the Drama department. The drama department asked for artifacts from the children about Peter and the Wolf. The CDC was able to determine what the artifacts were and how they approached this learning experience. They were able to broach the subject in a gradual open ended way which allowed for the children to process through their feelings of the story such as fear. The children eventually listened to the music and then finger painted Peter and the Wolf. For my LEP I am planning to play the music in the block area and observe what the children create. At this time I am unsure of exactly what LEP will be next. I do know that I will not only be conversing with the children but Carol Russell, Stacey, Heather, and Tina (Methods I Student).

**F. Scope and Sequence**

This was given to me by my cooperating teacher Stacey. I will be planning and implementing learning experiences based on the following.

**LEP’s for Older Preschool**

Social/Emotional Development

* Morning Meeting
* Book Circle

Physical Development

* Sensory Table
* Blocks (LEP #2 Peter and the Wolf Representations)

Language Development

* Story Table
* Writing Center

Creative Development

* Dramatic Play
* Art Table
* Music/Movement (LEP #1 Animal Action-Dancing)

Cognitive Development

* Math
* Science

Health and Safety

* Early Sprouts Curriculum

**G. Family and Community Involvement Plan**

I began my relationships with the families by sending a letter home. I introduced myself, explained my experience, and told them a little about me. I arrive at seven each day so I greet the children and families each morning. I say hello to both the parent and the child individually. I am still in the beginning phase of getting to know the children and families, so I often try to mention something I know they like such as the Celtics or one of the other children likes horses. The families at CDC are involved a great deal in their children’s preschool class. Families are welcome at any point. For birthday celebration the children make the cake which they make through their Early Sprouts Program. The families are invited for the special occasion. They share the snack and the children give the birthday child a heart that they made.

Communication happens daily between teachers and families in the older preschool classroom. Families and teachers (Stacy and Carole) often communicate through email, and or phone. Near the entrance to the classroom there is a daily journal where teachers communicate with families about what is going on in the classroom that day. For instance, a teacher might write what songs we sane during circle, what sensory activity the children had the opportunity to participate in, and/or who and what the special guest did with the children. Above the children’s cubbies there is a message board where teachers often post notices about local events, and important events for the CDC.

Preschoolers can help their community by practicing what they do everyday such as respecting one and another, and treating property in a respectful manner. The preschoolers at school take on an active role in their learning. They pour their own water, scoop their own snack, clean up when they are done, they take out toys and they put them away, they talk to their friends when there is a conflict-sometimes teacher guided talks, but all and all school is much like the community. The children can do small acts of kindness to help the community such as when they go for a walk with an adult and their dog, pick up after your dog, if you see trash throw it in the garbage can, and recycling can help the whole world, not just the community.

Future field trips the children could go on would be to a recycling plant and learn about what happens after the recycling person picks it up. The preschoolers could go to the farmers market for snack one day. They would be able to see and talk to the farmers about how they grew the produce. Reading books and talking about how helpful buying locally is would help the children understand why the farmers are there. The garden at the school helps the children to understand that produce does not just come from the grocery store.

The following is a letter that I sent home to families to introduce myself.

Dear Families,

My name is Andrea MacMurray. I am very excited to have the opportunity to join older preschool this semester. I am very eager to get to know each of your children! I grew up here in Keene, New Hampshire and graduated from Keene High School in 2007. I have had the pleasure of working with children ages birth through thirteen. I am First Aid and CPR certified and have been for many years now.

I have been working with children ever since I can remember. I started volunteering when I was twelve at Saint Joseph Regional School Child Care/Summer Camp and I currently am the Child Care/Summer Camp Director. I also took three years of Early Childhood and worked with children at Keene High Schools accredited early childhood program.

I am currently a senior at Keene State pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education with a second major of Sociology. For my methods one I was placed at the Children’s Learning Center at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Keene. I had the pleasure of working with younger toddlers. For my Methods II placement I was placed at Wells Memorial in Harrisville in second/third grade. I most recently completed the first half of my student teaching at Marlborough Elementary in first grade. I am very excited to have the opportunity to work with the older preschooler’s for seven weeks!

One of my favorite things to do is watch the Red Sox! I love going to Fenway as it is so much fun to ride the subway and see all the different buildings. I am a very active individual and I absolutely love Pilates and running. I am very excited to be able to learn with your children! I look forward to a great seven weeks with lots of learning!

Sincerely,

Andrea MacMurray

**Part III. Annotated Bibliography**

**A. Content Knowledge**

Baratte-Lorton, M. (1995). *Mathematics their way*. Parsippany, NJ: Dale Seymour Publications.

I used Baratte-Lorton to help me understand mathematics in the older preschool classroom. I plan to use this resource when I am planning a mathematics learning experience for the older preschoolers.

Bechtel, L, & Denton, P. (2004). Guided discovery in action. *Responsive Classroom Newsletter*, 16(3), 1-5.

I used this article to help me understand planed guided discovery experience can aid children in their learning process. This helped me to understand and better able to facilitate learning experiences in the older preschool classroom.

Copley, J. (2000). *The young child and mathematics*. Washington: NAEYC.

I will use this book to help me plan a learning experience for the older preschoolers. The book helps me to understand what a beneficial and meaningful mathematic experience might be for the children.

Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early*

*childhood programs serving children from birth to age 8.* (3rd edition). Washington, DC:

National Association for the Education of Young Children.

I used this resource to help me understand the development of my placement. I will base my interactions and planning needs on what is developmentally appropriate. I used this resource to write my developmental profile.

Curtis, D, & Carter, M. (1996). *Reflecting children’s lives*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

I used this book to help me understand the child centered curriculum. Where the children determine where to go next. This helped me to understand how the older preschool classroom plans their curriculum.

Dodge, D, Colker, L, & Heroman, C. (2008). *The creative curriculum – for preschool*.

Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies.

I used Dodge to describe the various curriculum areas I will be planning learning experiences under and what the children learn through these areas.

Gartrell, D. (2004). The power of guidance. Washington, DC: Delmar Cengage Learning.

I used Gartell to help describe my child guidance philosophy. I used his work to help describe my own personal belief on working with children.

New Hampshire Early Learning Guidelines 2005

Play. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.healthofchildren.com/P/Play.html>

I used this resource to help describe the stages of play in my developmental profile. The stages of play are solitary, parallel, associative, cooperative, and onlooker. Each stage develops as the child matures.

**B. Children’s Literature**

Aliki. (1996). *Hello! good-bye*!. New York: Green Willow Books.

We often discuss this story during circle. It is a nice way to learn and remind ourselves about greetings.

Cain, J. (2000). *The way i feel*. Seattle, WA: Parenting Press Inc.

I could use this book when a child was upset. It would give the child time to calm down and listen to a story about what they are feeling. They could hear that other people have these feelings too.

Gay, M. (2003). *Good night sam*. Toronto, Canada: Groundwork Books.

In the dramatic play area the methods I student has set up a night time routine play area. We have been reading many books about night time routines.

Humphrey, M. (2008). *The kids yoga book of feelings*. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Children.

I often read and do yoga with the children throughout the day and often before rest time.

Joan, C. (1997) *Peter and the wolf*. New York: Freudman/Fairfax.

The CDC is working with the drama center at KSC to create art work for the production Peter and the Wolf that they are planning to put on. I have participated in discussions about Peter and the Wolf with the students. I created a LEP for the block area where the children will be listening to the music of Peter and the Wolf and extending the story.

*My big truck book*. (2003). St Martin’s Press.

One of the children’s favorite kinds of books are trucks, expecially monster trucks (i.e. Grave Digger). I often read truck stories with him, as well as ask him how he knows about trucks.

Oxlade, C. (2005). *Mighty machines*. Laguna Hills, CA: QEB Publishing.

I will read this to the children if I hear them interested in tools and how things work.

Prorofiev, S. (1986). *Peter and the wolf*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

CDC Cooperating with the Drama Department. As stated above.

Vagin, V. (1998). *The enormous carrot*. New York: Scholastic.

I have read this story many times to the students. During book circle we acted out the parts.

Wood, A. (1984). *The napping house*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Compant.

During book circle we have acted out the napping aspect of the book. The book also aligns to the dramatic play set up now which is night time routines.

**C. Other Teacher Resources Consulted**

Stacy Fortin

Carol Russell

Heather- Student Teacher

Tina- Methods I Student