

## **Do You Want Your Child to.....**

- **Become an avid reader?**
- **Enjoy solving math problems?**
- **Speak and write well?**
- **Be creative?**
- **Make decisions?**
- **Develop physical coordination?**
- **Have good study skills?**
- **Get along with others?**
- **Be self-confident?**
- **Be curious?**
- **Enjoy school?**

If you want the above for your child then Rochester Community Schools early childhood program is for you because we share the same hopes for all children. This gives parents information about the foundation school years (K-2) in Rochester Community Schools. Our goal is to provide children with a well-rounded educational experience that promotes positive dispositions to be life long learners and productive citizens.

This explains our early childhood philosophy and goals. It also provides answers to some questions regarding the program.

# **Rochester Community Schools**

## **Early Childhood Philosophy**

Children enter school at various stages of social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Each child brings with him/her an unknown, unlimited potential for physical and intellectual growth which is developing into a creative and productive adulthood. It is, therefore, extremely important that a child's initial school experience be positive in order to help promote continued interest in learning.

Recognizing the variance in children as they progress through stages of growth and development, Rochester Community Schools offer a comprehensive program of learning experience to facilitate the needs of individual children. The curriculum is sequentially based beginning with kindergarten and extending through second grade. It provides opportunities for children to interact with and make choices within their social and physical environment.

Children should be challenged to extend and enrich their knowledge and skills through a learning environment that promotes opportunities for them to develop fully at school and at home within the limits of their own capability.

Adopted by the Board of Education, 1988

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### **Goal Statements**

- Early childhood programming provides a nurturing, developmentally appropriate environment that addresses the individual needs of the total child.
- The curriculum addresses the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive needs of the individual child in an integrated program.
- An integrated curriculum promotes life skills, a disposition to learn, and a sense of self esteem.
- This is cooperative inter-action between family and school.

## The Learning Environment

- Rochester Community Schools recognizes the importance of providing a learning environment that is developmentally appropriate for the children it serves.
- In a developmentally appropriate classroom, students have the opportunity to choose from a variety of activities within a structure established by the teacher.
- Children begin with concrete, hands-on learning experiences before moving on to a more abstract level.
- A wide range of materials provides experience in drama, construction, tactile and art media, manipulatives for math and fine motor, as well as language development and science exploration.
- Curriculum areas are interactive and integrated and a variety of multi-level activities are presented in order to meet the range of students' needs.

Results of this learning environment are that children develop:

- a sense of responsibility and self-discipline
- independence
- self-confidence
- socialization skills
- A LOVE OF LEARNING

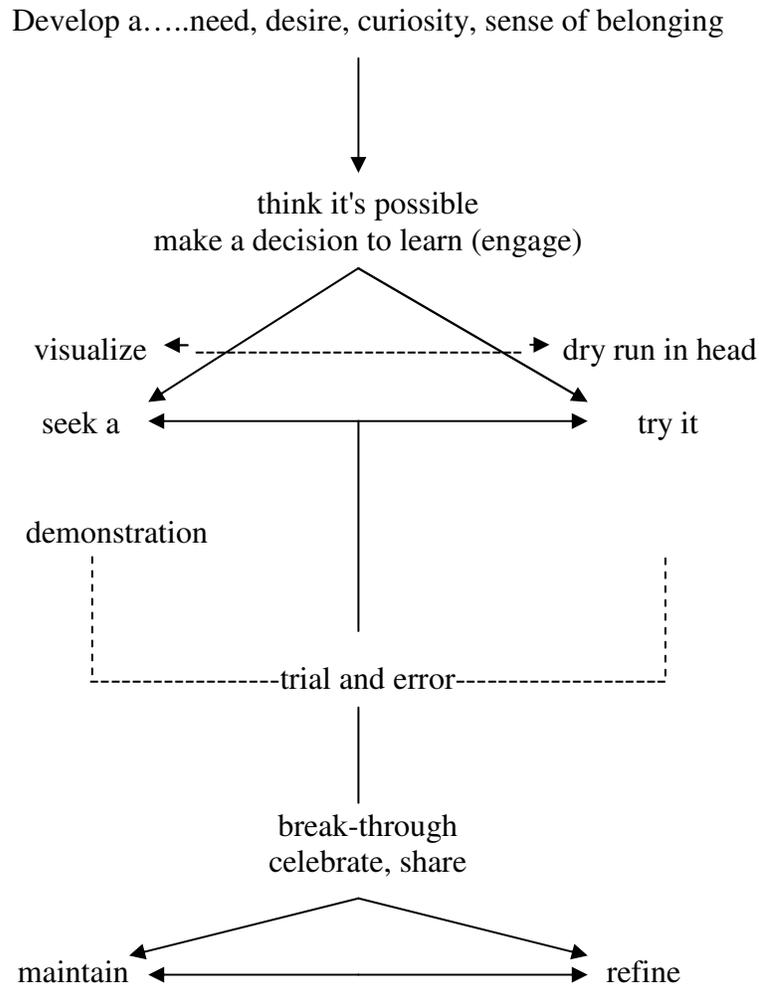
If intelligence develops as a whole by the child's own construction, then what makes this construction possible is the child's curiosity, interest, alertness, desire to communicate and exchange points of view, and a desire to make sense of it all.

*Constance Kamii, One Intelligence Indivisible*

## A Model for Learning

The following is a model for learning. The model shows stages that people (young and old) go through when attempting to learn something new. It was shared with many teachers by Andrea Butler, a well known and respected Australian educator. As you read through the model think about something that you have learned to do recently. The steps that are listed in the model are steps that most people would experience. As teachers in Rochester Community Schools teach, this model is used to plan the best way to facilitate learning in all curriculum areas.

### Learning Model



## **An Example of the Model for Learning**

The school environment tries to build on the positive lessons begun at home. As children's physical bodies began to develop they began to crawl and then walk. As this took place they were encouraged and supported by those around them. They also observed a great deal of modeling (adults walking). Parents did not sit down one day and give their child a lecture on how to walk. Children began taking risks and were encouraged to walk once their bodies were physically ready and they thought they could. They went through stages of development, conquering many obstacles, as they went from crawling to walking. They were given a great deal of encouragement. The result, after refinement, is balanced walking, running, hopping, jumping, and skipping.

*"What is learned with pleasure  
is seldom forgotten."*

*S. Stephens*

## **Four Principles of Early Childhood Education**

### ***LEARNING IS DEVELOPMENTAL***

Children acquire knowledge and skills based on their experiences and abilities.

### ***LEARNING IS AN ACTIVE PROCESS***

Children learn by being actively involved both physically and mentally.

### ***LEARNING IS HOLISTIC***

Children learn best when what they are learning is connected, integrated and balanced with other related experiences.

### ***LEARNING IS ENHANCED THROUGH A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT***

Children who have a positive self-concept are more likely to reach out for new experiences and challenges.

**Creating and Maintaining an Environment in which these  
Four Principles can be applied is the Key Role of the  
Teacher.**

## **Implementation of Rochester's Early Childhood Philosophy**

The early childhood philosophy currently implemented in Rochester Community Schools is based on research about how young children learn and develop. The teacher is a facilitator, an observer, mediator, interpreter, and manager of the environment. The teacher uses varied forms of instruction to meet the needs within the classroom. A variety of hands-on, concrete materials are used for conceptual learning before being given pencil and paper tasks. The physical structure of the classroom itself will provide the opportunity for children to work together and interact with a variety of materials in a number of ways.

Rochester Community Schools recognizes that change is a process not an event. The implementation of developmentally appropriate practices will vary from classroom to classroom and from building to building to better reflect the needs of the children, the community and varied teaching styles. The curriculum, however, continues to meet board adopted goals at each level.

*Children acquire knowledge about  
their physical and social worlds*

*through playful and successful interaction  
with people and objects*

*then thinking and talking about  
those experiences*

# General Curriculum Goal Statements

## I. Cognitive (intellectual)

Early childhood education provides many challenging opportunities to use and develop thinking skills and to identify and solve problems.

### A. Literacy

Rochester Community Schools recognizes literacy development as a top priority in early childhood. The program requires children to hear, speak, read and write meaningful language. The literacy program is developmental, holistic, integrated and built from the child's prior experiences. The following is encouraged:

#### Speaking:

- Talking with each other and sharing ideas
- Describing objects and events

#### Listening:

- Listening to others and the teacher

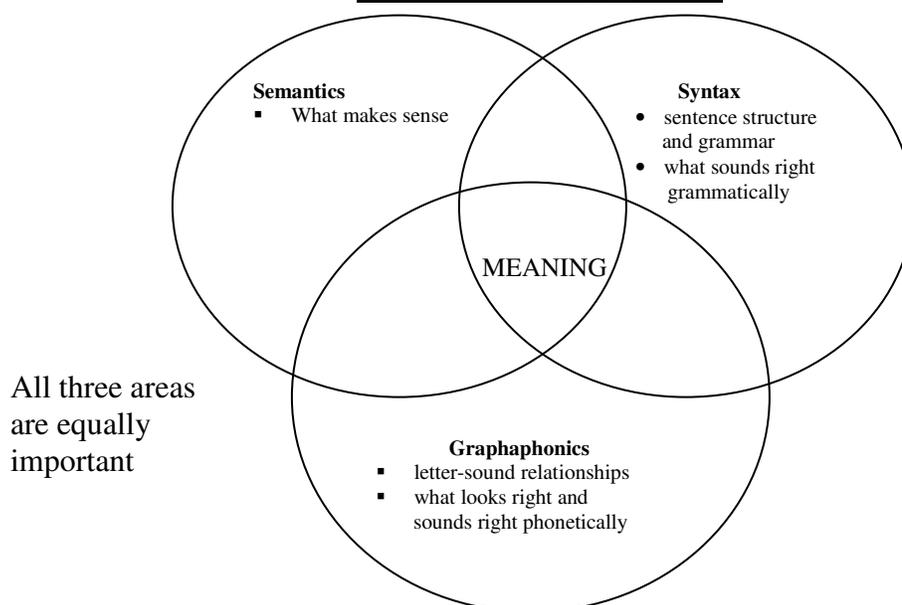
#### Writing:

- Recording thoughts
- Encouraging the use of temporary spelling as part of the writing process
- Spelling high-frequency words correctly
- Exposing children to a variety of forms of writing and writing materials

#### Reading:

- Promoting a positive attitude toward reading
- Understanding the symbols of print
- Telling stories about pictures and experience
- Comprehending and recalling story content
- Responding in various ways to reading
- Developing reading strategies using all three cueing systems depicted below

### The Three Cueing Systems



## **B. Mathematics**

Mathematics in grades K-2 is related to the child's immediate environment and his use of mathematics in the everyday world. Children are provided with numerous and varied opportunities to acquire mathematical skills and concepts. Children are provided time to explore at a concrete level before moving on to more abstract concepts. The following instructional strategies are encouraged:

- Participating in activities with varying levels of difficulty
- Providing opportunities for parent involvement at home
- Understanding and exploring the patterns of mathematics through the use of concrete materials
- Thinking, seeking, discovering, and testing ideas for themselves
- Working with partners or with a team
- Developing math knowledge in other curriculum areas and applying it
- Learning through a spiraling curriculum which reinforces previously introduced concepts

The following is a list of mathematical strands focused on during the year:

- A). Numeration
- B). Measurement
- C). Geometry
- D). Numerical and Algebraic Operations and Analytical Thinking
- E). Patterns, Relationships and Functions
- F). Statistics and Probability
- G). Technology

## **C. Social Studies**

Beginning with themselves and their families, children expand their learning to include the school and community. They develop an awareness of human commonalities and differences, an understanding of the necessity for rules, and basic concepts of economics as they apply to their own experiences.

"Living in harmony with other human beings may  
be one of the outstanding challenges  
for the whole human race."

Vera Hildebrand, Building Young Children

## **D. Science/Health**

In health as in social studies, children begin by learning about themselves. They learn about their five senses, good health habits, friendship and caring. Then they begin to examine the world around them. Science in grades K-2 is directly related to the child's experiences within their environment. Their natural curiosity, questioning and excitement are reinforced through activities that introduce life, physical and earth science concepts.

### **Curriculum Integration**

Integration of the curriculum areas is encouraged to promote the cognitive, physical, emotional, social and aesthetic development of children. By integrating the curriculum areas of science, health, social studies, literacy, and math, children can be involved in active, meaningful and purposeful activities. Children build and expand concepts of their understanding by:

- predicting
- observing
- comparing
- classifying
- manipulating
- questioning
- creating
- role playing
- reading
- writing

## **II. Physical Development:**

Early childhood education provides activities for children to develop awareness, attitudes and skills to improve body control and a safe life-style by:

- developing and maintaining gross motor skills
- developing and maintaining fine motor skills
- developing an appreciation and enjoyment of human movement
- learning and practicing safety procedures
- working cooperatively in group activities

## **III. Social Development:**

Early childhood education provides many opportunities for children to develop positive social behaviors. Experiences are provided that help children in:

- working and playing alone
- cooperating
- developing friendships
- sharing
- respecting and accepting others
- anticipating consequences of actions

#### **IV. Emotional Development:**

Early childhood education provides and constructs situations in which children can create positive images of self, peers, and the environment while:

- developing a positive, realistic self concept
- accepting and expressing emotions in socially acceptable ways
- accepting challenge
- feeling pride in accomplishments
- enjoying living and learning

#### **V. Aesthetic Development:**

Early childhood education provides activities for children to integrate feeling, thought, and action in their environment by:

- responding to the arts
- fostering enthusiasm for the arts
- representing through a variety of forms
- appreciating the interrelationships between and among the arts
- exploring, expressing, visualizing, interpreting

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Why did Rochester implement Early Childhood Education?**

Knowledge based on research in child development indicates that children learn best through active, hands-on learning. Children learn (much better) by touching, seeing, smelling, hearing and tasting. Our goal is to provide a program that meets the learning needs of the whole child and develops the physical, social, emotional and intellectual aspects of each child. Our program is designed to fit the child instead of making the child fit the program.

#### **Should I send my 5 year-old to kindergarten if the Pre-school says not to?**

This is a decision only a parent can make. We have moved in a direction that allows us to better meet the needs of children at varying levels. We feel it is our responsibility to be ready for the children by providing an environment that offers opportunities to be successful and challenged.

#### **What can I do to help my child make a successful transition to school?**

Helping children to foster independence is an important first step. This would include learning to take care of your own things (i.e. taking their coat on and off instead of Mom and Dad doing it for them) and taking care of personal hygiene when possible. Research shows that reading to your child is the single most important thing a parent can do to ensure a child's success. Read to your child every day and encourage him/her to "read" the pictures and talk about the story. Children benefit from drawing their own stories and telling about them. You can also build an awareness of print (both numbers and letters) in your child's everyday world.

## **How is reading viewed in an Early Childhood classroom?**

Reading is an integral part of the literacy process. A literacy program requires children to hear, speak, read and write meaningful language. The integration of these skills into the daily activities in various ways builds a positive attitude toward reading. Just as we learn to speak by being immersed in oral language, we learn to read by being immersed in written language. Teachers provide a print rich environment in which children are involved in reading and writing throughout the day.

## **What about phonics?**

Phonetic elements are integrated into meaningful reading experiences rather than taught in isolation. Phonics is still an important component of the total reading program and it is taught in a context that is meaningful to the children. In addition to phonics, we encourage children to use other reading strategies such as picture clues, reading on, rereading and thinking about what makes sense.

## **What is temporary (invented) spelling and why is it encouraged?**

Temporary or invented spelling is the spelling that children derive on their own. The development of spelling goes through a series of stages. It begins with little or no relationship to the printed word adults use. As children have more experiences with language, letter sounds, and reading, they begin to use their intuitive understanding of words and letter/sounds to develop closer representations to book spellings. Children begin to use many conventional forms as their background in literacy expands. Temporary spelling is encouraged in order to allow children to write and express their ideas without losing their thoughts because they are overly concerned with book spelling. Children are encouraged to use conventional forms as their background in literacy expands. The most frequently used words are introduced by the teacher, and children are expected to spell a gradually increasing number of these words in their writing.

## **What do you mean by the writing process?**

As with spelling, writing goes through a series of stages beginning with "pretend writing" to using letters to represent words and progressing to writing words, sentences, and stories. As part of the writing process children are taught how to revise, proofread and edit when a piece of writing is to be published. Teachers collect samples of children's writing in order to document progress and to guide instruction.

## **How is math taught?**

Math is related to the child's real world. Children are immersed in the language, symbols and concepts of mathematics. Children are introduced to concepts using a variety of real objects and concrete experiences. They manipulate the materials in many varied problem solving activities in order to begin making logical sense of the world of math. Children develop conceptual understandings through a balance of games, direct instruction and independent practice. Math concepts are continually revisited to reinforce student's understanding and to build on his/her prior knowledge.

## **What happened to the workbooks and worksheets?**

Teachers have become more selective in their use of workbooks and worksheets. We are focusing our program on higher level thinking skills and conceptual understandings.

Teachers are providing activities that are meaningful to children, while building on concepts and skills. The primary use of worksheets is to help reinforce concepts.

### **How does the teacher keep track of my child's progress?**

Teachers in Rochester Community Schools use a variety of ways to monitor students progress. Assessing progress is an integral part of curriculum and instruction and is used to help plan instruction for groups and/or individual students. Work samples, writing folders, spelling inventories, checklists, conversations with students and parents, informal and formal tests all are used to keep track of student progress. The most formal way the school communicates student progress is through the report card and conferences.

### **How do I know what my child is doing in school?**

Parents want and need to know what is being worked on at school. Early childhood education focuses on many hands-on experiences with real objects, therefore, there is less paper work sent home. For years papers have given parents some idea of classroom work. Teachers are focusing on other methods to communicate. Teachers often send newsletters home to inform parents of classroom activities. Some rooms have parent volunteers who work in the classrooms with children. Telephone calls, short notes, report cards, PTA meetings and parent workshops are all additional ways to keep informed about classroom activities. Another technique would be to send your child to school with a question on his/her mind. "When you come home from school today I want you to tell me on thing you did in math today." With a specific idea in mind, your child has something to focus on, rather than asking the standard, "What did you do in school today?"

### **How does the program work with special needs children?**

A developmentally appropriate curriculum is capable of meeting a broad range of abilities. All children will have the opportunity to be educated in an environment that best meets their needs.

### **Will this program prepare my child for the next year?**

Children enter school at various stages of development. It is important that a child's school experiences be positive in order to promote continued interest in learning. The Rochester School District is committed to offering a comprehensive program of learning experiences to facilitate the needs of individual children. It is recognized that there is a variance in children as they progress through stages of growth and development. Most students will successfully progress to the next grade level.

"If facts are seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom,  
then the emotions and impressions of the senses are the fertile soil  
in which seeds must grow."

*Rachel Carson, The Sense of Wonder*