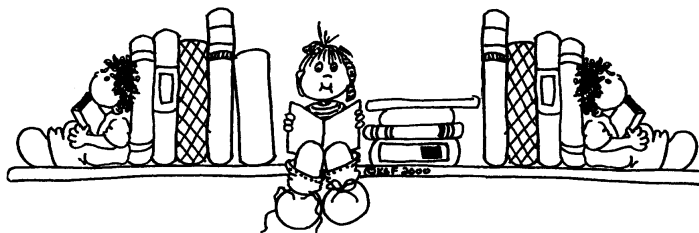
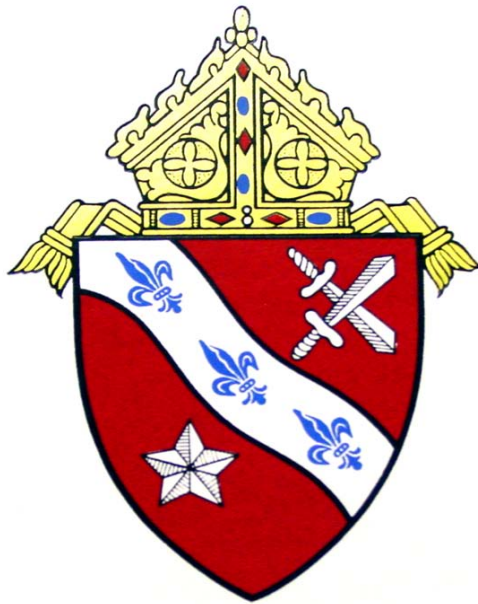


# Early Childhood Educational Standards

Diocese of Dallas  
as adapted from the  
Archdiocese of Hartford, CT



September 2008

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# Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum Committee

Sincere gratitude is extended to the members of the 2006 Pre-K Committee, not only for the time, effort, and dedication that went into this document, but for their love of children and the concern for the early childhood education in the Diocese of Dallas. Special thanks goes to Lydia Forgetta-Sheffield, the Committee Chair, for her enthusiasm, energy, and passion for helping the young child know him/herself, develop his/her talents and come to a loving God.

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## PEDAGOGY

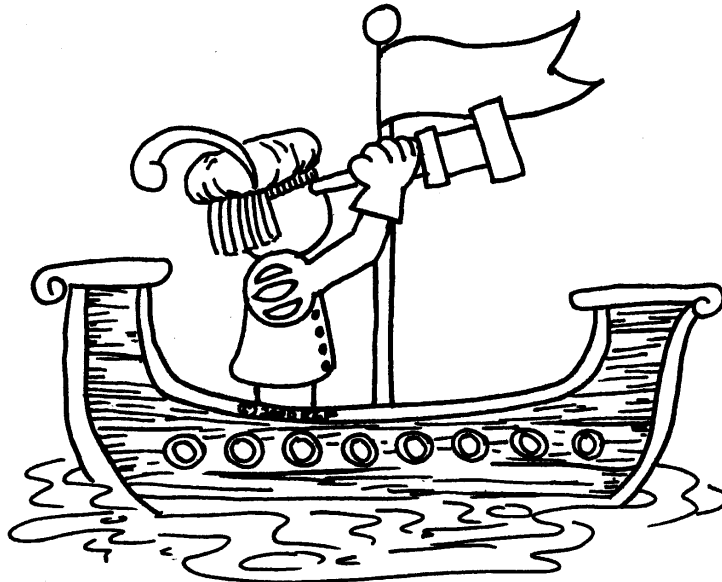
*The Pre-Kindergarten Educational Standards for the Diocese of Dallas is aligned with the State of Connecticut Preschool Assessment Frameworks, the National Association for the Education of Young Children Early Learning Standards, and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Preschool Standards.*

As Catholic early childhood educators, we minister to the whole child – mind, heart and hands. In a trusting Catholic environment, we enable the child to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually. Awakening the child's innate desire to learn, we foster creativity and excitement about learning by facilitating a stimulating environment. We understand each child's uniqueness in personality and learning styles. We create for the early learner opportunities to discover, explore, question, and succeed, thus providing the proper environment which enables the child freedom of choice. Above all, our setting nurtures the child's spiritual relationship with God and caring attitude for others.

## GOALS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

- FACILITATE opportunities in spiritual, physical, social, cognitive, language, and aesthetic development
- CREATE an atmosphere where children appreciate a quiet time preparing them to begin a friendship with God
- INITIATE in the early learner the sacredness of life
- NURTURE a warm, caring environment that develops self-esteem and a positive attitude toward learning

Keeping in mind the cognitive and psychomotor characteristics of the child's life, care should be taken not to over-emphasize the mastery of subject matter to the detriment of the child's personal, social, and emotional growth. Curricula design of a pre-kindergarten program must be a synthesis of opportunities that build a foundation for future learning.



# Standards of a Quality Catholic Early Childhood Program

## STANDARD 1: Relationships

**Effective Catholic early childhood programs foster each child's personal relationship with God. It promotes positive relationships among all children and adults encouraging each child's sense of individual worth and his or her sense of belonging to a community. Furthermore, it fosters each child's ability to contribute as a responsible community member. (NAEYC)**

The early childhood teacher provides experiences for the young child that:

- Strengthen the child's sense of prayer through reverence for God's creation
- Provide multi-sensory experiences for the young child to discover the mysteries of nature, culminating in a respect for life
- Build a sense of trust with the young child by permeating the pre-school environment with warmth and sincerity
- Develop play and work situations where the young child is kind to his/her peers and respects personal property and community property
- Cultivate opportunities to develop the Gospel value of justice by caring for each other
- Empowers the child to be sensitive and aware of the diversity among them and to respect differences in skills, talents, interests, race, color, and gender
- Inculcate within the young child a sense of integrity
- Foster occasions for the child to think critically and to solve problems without direct adult intervention
- Encourage an atmosphere of loving concern to enhance independence and cooperation

## **STANDARD 2: The Early Childhood Educator**

**An effective Catholic preschool program employs and supports a teaching staff that has the educational qualifications, the knowledge and commitment to both faith and early childhood education necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests.**

**The teacher awakens a sense of joy and wonder in each child. He/she cultivates in the young learner a desire for knowledge and the freedom of creative expression.**

The effective preschool teacher:

- Views every child as a child of God with a unique personality
- Respects each child's gifts and allows each child to develop at his/her own pace by providing a myriad of experiences and activities
- Integrates the curriculum with projects, learning centers, and multi-sensory activities that reflect the child's interests and differentiates instruction to accommodate individual learning styles and abilities
- Plans programs that help the child develop concepts and skills necessary to live in today's media saturated world
- Encourages each child's development of self esteem and respect for others as a basis for knowledge, responsibility, cooperation, and the blossoming of the child's creative potential
- Encourages children to work together in small groups
- Uses PLAY as a teaching and learning strategy which reinforces for the child a desire to be an integral part of his/her own world of relationships and cognitive development
- Sets clear behavioral limits in a positive, loving, manner
- Views parents as partners and encourages their involvement
- Designs and implements learning experiences and uses strategies that acknowledge each child as competent

## STANDARD 3: Teaching Strategies

**An effective pre-school program uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child's learning and development in the context of the program's curriculum goals.**

It is important that the early childhood educator minister to the whole child – mind, heart, and hands.

To achieve this, the teacher must pay special attention to the developmental level of the child. Teachers of three and four-year-olds must realize that the physical and psychological development of each child is different. The following charts are provided to validate the philosophy that before a child can move onto the next phase of development, specific tasks must be mastered. These guidelines facilitate the preschool teacher's response to the uniqueness of each child in order to aide the child's growth toward Catholic and academic maturity.

### THE CHILD AT AGE THREE

<p><b>Physical Growth:</b> Motor Development</p>	<p>The child at three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stretches and moves frequently</li><li>• Strengthens use of hand skills through building with materials</li><li>• Feeds self with little or no help</li><li>• Manages front buttons</li><li>• Enjoys use of complex toys</li><li>• Accomplishes self-care activities with minimal difficulty</li><li>• Climbs and runs with skill</li><li>• Eager to assist in household tasks</li></ul>
<p><b>Social-Emotional Growth:</b> Development of self-concept, concept of others and of the world</p>	<p>The child at three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Needs to be valued as an individual</li><li>• Is sensitive to other's actions, attitudes, and feelings</li><li>• Shows natural inclinations to understand the environment</li><li>• Is self-centered</li><li>• Is agreeable, wants to please</li><li>• Asserts independence</li><li>• Conforms to requests</li><li>• Develops concepts through role playing</li><li>• Participates in group play</li><li>• Desires to experience success</li><li>• Acts and reacts on the feeling level; laughs, claps hands, jumps</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to adult enthusiasm or sympathy</li> <li>• Enjoys being with other children, but still likes to play alone</li> <li>• Grows in self-worth when offered words of genuine praise</li> <li>• Requires enough freedom to achieve a measure of independence; benefits from free time with tools such as sand, stack toys, and crayons</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intellectual Growth</b></p>	<p>The child at three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not understand symbolism (A fish is a fish, not a symbol for Christianity.)</li> <li>• Speaks in short sentences</li> <li>• Makes and understands pertinent comments</li> <li>• Shows marked growth in language development – 750 word vocabulary</li> <li>• Limited attention span</li> <li>• Enjoys simple stories; wants them retold with the same sequence, same words and same inflections</li> <li>• Practices conversational skills</li> <li>• Needs to build a background of experience by seeing and often touching lesson-related pictures and objects</li> <li>• May have difficulty in understanding directions, requires one brief direction at a time</li> </ul>
<p><b>Religious Development</b></p>	<p>The child at three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands God’s love demonstrated better than God’s word explained</li> <li>• Needs to develop healthy self- esteem</li> <li>• Shows an openness to reverence for religion as seen in the home</li> <li>• Needs to establish a trusting relationship with God as a loving person</li> <li>• Is trusting and ready to accept what is told about God</li> <li>• Is capable of believing that God loves each person</li> <li>• Is sensitive to attitudes of prayer</li> <li>• Delights in simple, spontaneous prayer; lacks understanding of formal prayer</li> <li>• Views the teacher as representing God’s love</li> <li>• Observes and imitates adult actions toward others</li> <li>• Views school as a place where children are wanted and loved.</li> </ul>

Note: Around three and a half, many children change dramatically. Referring to the following developmental summary for four-year-olds may be helpful in understanding mature threes.

## THE CHILD AT AGE FOUR

<p><b>Physical Growth:</b> Motor Development</p>	<p>The child at four:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is active – needs activity</li> <li>• Is incapable of sitting still for any length of time unless highly motivated</li> <li>• Hops, gallops, skips</li> <li>• Hits; kicks</li> <li>• Is interested in manipulative materials</li> <li>• Has fair control at easel</li> <li>• Is an expert in the use of wheel toys (tricycles, wagons, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social-Emotional Growth:</b> Development of self—concept, concept of others and of the world</p>	<p>The child at four:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tests the world</li> <li>• Is self-dependent in routines</li> <li>• Can be assertively confident of abilities</li> <li>• Craves companionship of peers</li> <li>• Resists regulations and suggestions that limit freedom; throws fits of rage</li> <li>• Begins to see wisdom of rules</li> <li>• Likes to make choices</li> <li>• Likes group work and planned experiences</li> <li>• Usually radiates good fellowship</li> <li>• Is less sensitive, less vulnerable, less demanding with other children than at age three</li> <li>• Has a broad sense of humor</li> <li>• Argues with parent or caregiver</li> <li>• Is sensitive to the feelings and attitudes of familiar adults</li> <li>• Shows a growing interest in doing things with other children</li> <li>• Desires the experience of working in small groups</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intellectual Growth</b></p>	<p>The child at four:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a strong desire to learn</li> <li>• Is eager for intellectual manipulatives (puzzles, jokes, etc)</li> <li>• Perceives analogies</li> <li>• Is imaginative</li> <li>• Displays an active tendency to conceptualize</li> <li>• Demonstrates high verbal aggression and generalizes – 1500word vocabulary</li> <li>• Has limited verbal expression of experiences</li> <li>• Uses “and” frequently</li> <li>• Learns name and address</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is not always able to make adequate judgments for personal safety (for example, may not realize glass can break and cut)</li> <li>• Extends perceptual ability; artwork becomes more detailed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Religious Development</b></p>	<p>The child at four:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is capable of beginning to understand God's love by experiencing human love</li> <li>• Needs to have demonstrated that God made each child unique and special</li> <li>• Knows that praying is talking to God and that people can use their own words when praying</li> <li>• Observes how religious matters are handled by adults</li> <li>• Wants to have questions about God answered truthfully and concisely</li> <li>• Desires to do friendly things for others as part of God's community</li> <li>• Radiates when recognized for acts of kindness</li> <li>• Needs to have positive successful religious experiences</li> <li>• Can be spiritually damaged if God is used by adults as a means of correction or control</li> </ul>

## THE CHILD AT AGE FIVE AND SIX

<p><b>Physical Growth:</b> Motor Development coordinates more complex movements with increasing control, balance and accuracy</p> <p>Using opposing hand movements to manipulate materials including cutting and drawing with control</p>	<p>The child at five and six:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hops on one foot</li> <li>• Moves to catch a ball, but may still trap it against body rather than with hands</li> <li>• Throws ball overhand</li> <li>• Is physically active</li> <li>• Is capable of sitting for longer periods of time</li> <li>• Pumps on a swing</li> <li>• Constructs patterns with small mosaic block, paper shapes and stripes</li> <li>• Holds pencil with standard grip to draw objects and shapes with control and accuracy (circles, squares, and letters)</li> <li>• Cuts out form/shape with straight and curved lines</li> </ul>
<p><b>Growth in Self-Reliance</b> Practicing personal hygiene and self-help skills</p>	<p>The child at five and six:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages all aspects of dressing, eating, and toileting independently</li> <li>• Practices personal hygiene</li> <li>• Develops table manners</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social-Emotional Growth:</b> Development of self—concept, concept of others and of the world</p>	<p>The child at five and six:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independently selects and participates in a wide variety of activities</li> <li>• Requests additional material to extend work</li> <li>• Actively experiments, often without need for encouragement</li> <li>• Persists with both self-selected and teacher directed tasks until the task is completed</li> <li>• Stays with task or activity that may take several sessions to complete</li> <li>• Returns to activity after a break or interruption</li> <li>• Actively participates in whole group activities and usually waits his/her turn</li> <li>• Usually listens attentively, waits turn, and responds appropriately to teacher directions</li> <li>• Anticipates transitions and usually follows routines and rules independently</li> <li>• Anticipate and verbalizes routines and rules</li> <li>• Describes consequences of breaking rules</li> <li>• Independently identifies own feeling related to a cause using words</li> <li>• Understands when others' needs are different from own</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to take other's point of view</li> <li>• Sustains cooperative activities with a range of children</li> <li>• Enters work/play situation and participates cooperatively in sustained activity with a variety of peers</li> <li>• Negotiates by making and accepting suggestions for play or work</li> <li>• Usually takes turns in play</li> <li>• Begins to solve conflicts directly with peers using appropriate strategies</li> <li>• Independently attempts to solve conflicts with peers by offering solutions and by trying appropriate strategies before seeking teacher's help</li> <li>• Accepts reasonable compromise</li> <li>• Demonstrates respect for differences among others and plays with a variety of peers regardless of gender, race or ability</li> <li>• Chooses to interact with a variety of children</li> <li>• Shows positive feelings toward differences</li> <li>• Needs affirmation and individual attention</li> <li>• Prefers associative play in small groups</li> <li>• Feels socialized pride in clothes and accomplishments</li> <li>• Wants to do things others do</li> <li>• Shows a sense of humor; enjoys tricks, jokes</li> <li>• Has good social relationships with parents or chief care givers</li> <li>• Is capable of sitting in group situation</li> <li>• Is developing a social conscience</li> <li>• Seeks affection from other children and adults</li> <li>• Wants to establish a good relationship with teacher</li> <li>• Demonstrates considerable freedom in choosing friends</li> <li>• May be hurt by being compared with other children</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intellectual Growth</b></p>	<p>The child at five and six:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is curious and eager to learn</li> <li>• Talks without infantile articulation-5000 word vocabulary</li> <li>• Narrates a long tale</li> <li>• Has increased attention span</li> <li>• Is eager to listen to stories</li> <li>• Is capable of attentive listening and can carry out instructions</li> <li>• Enjoys activities that allow an exchange of ideas among peers</li> <li>• Is able to plan and work on simple projects</li> </ul>

<b>Spiritual Development</b>	<p>The child at five and six:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is growing in the knowledge of own self-worth and ability</li><li>• Knows God made and loves him/her</li><li>• Is capable of knowing God is interested in everyday experiences</li><li>• Needs to experience and associate God with positive, joyful occasions</li><li>• Articulates that God not only loves him/her, but wants that love shared with others</li><li>• Shows verbally and nonverbally, that the most effective example of God's love is a loving, concerned adult</li><li>• Is conscious of adult feelings when they talk about God</li><li>• Understand that he/she is a member of a school community and he/she will be missed when not present</li><li>• Understands that he/she is part of a home, school, parish, and world community</li><li>• Is developing a sense of him/herself as a caretaker of God's creation</li><li>• Is developing the ability to pray simple prayers and express gratitude and praise to and love for God</li><li>• Is developing a sense of him/herself as a peacemaker</li></ul>
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The teacher will incorporate into her/his daily schedule the following teaching strategies:

#### BE MIND-FULL

The teacher will:

- Follow a planned daily schedule that provides opportunities to develop positive social skills.
- Set goals for each child that integrate various learning styles
- Provide experiences for decision-making and critical thinking.

#### BE HEART-WARMING

The teacher will:

- Nurture each child
- Establish a positive learning environment that promotes self-respect and respect for others.

#### PROVIDE HANDS-FULL

The teacher will:

- Provide learning experiences through a myriad of activities:

##### SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Religious activities, which include music, art, literature

##### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Table, sand and water activities  
Creative expression  
Block and woodworking  
Large motor activities  
Art and movement activities

##### LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Reading and listening (using traditional books and equipment or Using computer technology/Internet)  
Finger plays  
Puppetry  
Music  
Creative dramatics

##### SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Games which include dramatic play, board games, computer or electronic games, and physical play

##### COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Cooking activities  
Manipulative math experiences

Science  
Critical thinking  
Problem solving  
Software that supports critical thinking and problem solving

**Within the schools of the Diocese of Dallas, a variety of early childhood models exists. Some schools accept children before their third birthday. Some schools have full day programs in Pre-K and some have partial day programs. Almost all schools have full day kindergarten programs. However, in all early childhood classrooms, the developmental level of children must be recognized and revered. To achieve this, the teacher must pay special attention to the maturity and growth of each child. With that in mind, teachers and administrators must understand that the standards and performance skills listed in this document are those that children may achieve by the end of their Pre-K 3, Pre-K 4 and Kindergarten experiences. The chronological birthday and developmental level of the child must always be considered in evaluating performance standards. Teachers and parents should realize that performance standards are the building blocks of early childhood education.**

*Children have real understanding only of that which they invent themselves, and each time that we try to teach them something too quickly, we keep them from re-inventing it themselves.*

Jean Piaget

## STANDARD 4: Physical/Learning Environment

An effective early childhood program provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments, including facilities, equipment, and materials to facilitate child and staff learning and development. To this end, a program structures a safe and healthful environment. Successful early childhood teachers understand that the learning environment should contribute to a sense of wellbeing and security for children. An effective learning environment is another teacher, igniting social, affective, and cognitive learning because of its power to organize, provide a myriad of experiences, and promote choices in daily activities. In the words of Lelia Gardini, the early childhood classroom environment is "an aquarium that mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and cultures of the children within it."

The physical setting of the classroom should:

- Be warm and inviting
- Stimulate the child's intellect
- Awaken the child's curiosity
- Promote critical thinking skills
- Energize creative expression
- Promote independence
- Foster decision making
- Welcome and encourage cooperation
- 

### REGULATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *REGULATIONS*

Local fire, building and town Health Department officials must be contacted to obtain local codes. Local codes must be followed to insure the health and safety of each child.

#### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

##### A. INDOOR

1. Sufficient indoor space must be provided for active and quiet play. Generally the space, based on the number of children, is one child for every 35 to 50 square feet of indoor space.
2. An in-classroom bathroom facility is **strongly recommended** for this age group. If this is not possible, a bathroom should be located on the same floor within close proximity to the classroom. In the latter setting an adult must always accompany a child to the bathroom.
3. The room should be furnished with appropriate sized chairs and tables.
4. Developmentally appropriate play materials and manipulatives should be provided in the learning centers.
5. Play materials which encourage imagination and self-expression should be provided.

## B. MATERIALS FOR LEARNING CENTERS

*(Please note that in the choice of any games and materials, it is important to remember the developmental level of the children in the program. Small objects can be swallowed by three-year olds.)*

### Invitations to Complex Learning

Set up materials in a way to invite complex and creative usage. For example, a set of blocks in a basket with some small mirrors, some pieces of graphing paper and felt pens may stretch the child's ability for creating symmetrical designs, drawing patterns, and sorting and classifying objects.

1. Materials to aid the early learner to make choices:
  - stacking shapes
  - matching games
  - sorting games and puzzles
  - shape games
  - color games
  - comparative size games
  - seriatim games and puzzles
  - things to compare
  - things that are alike
  - things that are different
  - things that are hard, soft, big, little, smooth, rough, bumpy, sticky, stretchy, shiny, cold, warm, thick, thin
  - computer games
  
2. Manipulatives for early learner's small muscle development and eye-hand coordination:
  - inset puzzles
  - jigsaw puzzles
  - paper and crayons
  - scissors
  - snap boards
  - lacing boards
  - nuts and bolts
  - locks and keys
  - beads and strings
  - Lego blocks
  - tinker toys
  - turn-a-gears
  - jumbo beads
  - pegs and peg boards (large)
  - magnetic shapes
  
3. Materials for sensory and tactile awareness:
  - plasticine
  - modeling clay
  - play dough
  - wet sand

- paints
  - finger paints
4. Imaginative thinking materials:
- large blocks
  - cars
  - trucks
  - animals
  - people
  - signs
5. Science and scientific tools for early learners:
- magnifying glass
  - magnets
  - kaleidoscope
  - toy compass
  - outdoor thermometer
  - prisms
  - light table
  - computer games
  - microscope binocular
  - notebook/clipboard
  - nature books
  - rocks
  - shells
  - bones
  - leaves
  - plants
6. Materials for natural science to motivate the early learner to question and explore:
- plants
  - pets
  - flowers
  - live fish
  - nuts
  - foods
  - insects
  - shells
  - seed pods
  - grains
  - pebbles
  - bugs
  - leaves
  - rocks
  - feathers
7. Materials for a woodworking center:
- hammer
  - pliers

- screwdriver
- saw
- screen
- wood box
- wood scraps
- nuts/bolts
- safety goggles

8. Materials for a Music/Art Center:

- reprints of culturally varied artists' works on display
- variety of unusual papers: construction paper, wallpaper, sandpaper
- paint brushes of all types
- boxes for storage
- paint
- easels
- felt board
- junk materials: packing materials, boxes, cups, feathers, paper plates, scoops
- wind chimes
- tambourines
- tone blocks
- rhythm sticks or blocks
- xylophone
- drums
- maracas
- cassette player, CD player
- bells
- sand blocks
- music software
- triangles

9. Materials for a Housekeeping Center:

- play stove
- play refrigerator
- play cupboard
- play sand
- table and chairs
- tableware
- dolls
- doll bed
- telephone
- dress-up clothes (Avoid hats. Be sure all items are laundered regularly.)
- cabinets
- household items (pots, pans, dishes, cups)
- recipe cards
- cook books
- mirror
- clock
- high chair
- empty food boxes

10. Materials for gross motor activities:
  - large and small balls
  - parachute
  - balance beam
  - exercise mats
  
11. Materials for a Math Center:
  - inset number blocks
  - number scale
  - tactile numbers
  - rulers
  - magnetic numerals and board
  - clock
  - bathroom scale
  - egg timer
  - balance scale
  - abacus
  - fractional shape puzzles
  - dominoes
  - measuring cups
  - geometric shapes
  - counting sets
  - play money
  - counting cubes
  - lotto games
  - number games
  - counting objects (play money, foreign coins (kindergarten))
  - computer software
  
12. Math and Math Manipulatives:
  - unique items for sorting (foreign coins, shells, tiles, rocks, jewels, buttons, colored macaroni)
  - unusual containers to sort in (baskets, boxes in different sizes, trays)
  - measuring devices (bathroom scale, postal scale, food scale, yardstick, folding or rectangular rulers, measuring tapes)
  - non-standard measuring devices (ribbon, yarn, string, beads, uni-fix cubes, belts, adding machine tape)
  - patterned items to explore and match (fabric, old wall paper samples, colored toothpicks, counting bears or dinosaurs, toy cars, trucks, airplanes, keys, marbles, craft pompoms, buttons and sequins)
  
13. Language and Literacy:
  - pillows
  - rocking chairs
  - appropriate sized chairs and tables
  - colorful notebooks, unusually shaped pads
  - rubber stamps and stamp pads
  - scissors
  - glue or paste
  - pens, felt markers, pencils, crayons
  - an old typewriter
  - computer

14. Materials for exploring letters and words:

- inset letter blocks
- cutout wooden letters
- plastic letters
- sandpaper letters
- alphabet lotto
- rubber stamp letters and pads
- beaded alphabet cards
- rubber word stamps
- tape recorder and cassettes
- CD player
- DVD player
- Labels
- computer software

In planning the classroom environment, the teacher should look at the room from the child's perspective and then:

- separate noisy from quiet areas
- clearly define areas with furniture, low bulletin boards, child sized tables and chairs, low plants or changes in ground level flooring
- place materials at child's eye view, with the child's physical perspective in mind
- separate child's and teacher's materials
- provide materials for learning centers to enrich environment in language literacy, math and math manipulative, art and kinesthetic activities, and dramatic play
- allow pathways for clear travel between areas or centers

Above all, in creating the classroom environment it should be organized, neat, colorful, aesthetically pleasing, uncluttered, and comfortable.

C. OUTDOOR

1. Sufficient outdoor space must be provided for gross motor play. Generally 75 to 100 square feet of outdoor space must be available for each child.
2. The area should be fenced in completely and free of debris.

A three-fold pattern to enrich the classroom environment:

**PROVISIONS FOR REAL LIFE EXPERIENCES**

Provide experiences in the classroom that represent REAL LIFE ACTIVITIES and living things.

**Examples:** Plants, small animals, terrariums and aquariums provide opportunities to care for living things. Activities such as gardening, washing dishes and cleaning up the dramatic play area gives children a sense of competence with real tools in the world.

Materials such as clay, blocks or paints represent forms of diverse culture. Visual displays such as rocks, shells, leaves and things of nature reflect the cultures of all children and are essential to real life experiences.

## **ENCOURAGE CROSS-CURRICULAR IDEAS**

Placing areas adjacent to one another may encourage cross-curricular ideas.

**Example:** The blocks adjacent to the writing center will encourage children to combine their constructive play projects with writing projects such as labeling a door in their construction. It can foster cooperative play encouraging those in the writing center to make signs or draw people for the construction.

## **STANDARD 5: Administration and Management**

**An effective early childhood program successfully implements policies, procedures and systems in support of stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so that all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences.**

### A. Staff

- All early childhood educators should be loving and nurturing. Ideally, they should be trained in early childhood education, be in possession of a BA degree and meet all other requirements of the OCS. (See Diocesan Policies)
- Early childhood educators should participate in all required Diocesan workshops and take advantage of all opportunities for professional growth. (Professional organizations, state educational associations, professional in-service, literature, etc.)
- Staff members must have current first aid and infant/child CPR training.

### B. Fiscal

- The principal/director/teacher should operate within a budget
- Parents should know in advance when fees are due
- A system of records and receipts should be maintained
- The school reserves the right to dismiss a student for delinquency in payment of fees.

### C. Enrollment

- Enrollment in school shall be granted regardless of race, creed, or color
- The school should establish an age for enrollment and birthday cut off date. In general it is best if schools require that children be three, four, or five before September 1<sup>st</sup>. The state of Connecticut requirement is that the child be three, four, or five before January 1.
- Children should be toilet-trained before they are enrolled in a pre-school program.

### D. Management

- Parents should be informed regarding:
  - Opening and closing times
  - Daily schedules
  - Vacation days
  - Holidays
  - Unexpected early dismissals

As recommended by NAEYC:

- The size of the three-year-old group should be a ratio of 1:7. If there is one teacher and a para-professional, class size should not exceed fourteen students
- The size of the four-year-old group should be a ratio of 1:10. If there is one teacher and one para-professional, class size should not exceed twenty students.
- The size of kindergarten group should be a ratio of 1:10. If there is one teacher and a para-professional, class size should not exceed twenty-four students.
- Schedules shall be in keeping with developmentally appropriate standards.

## STANDARD 6: Health

**An effective early childhood program promotes the nutrition and health of all children and staff and protects them from preventable illness and injury.**

### HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

- A health certificate, signed by a physician, is required at the time a child is admitted to school.
- Children are required to have updated immunization against diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, polio, and a tuberculin test.
- An updated emergency card must be on file for each child so that, in case of illness or other emergencies, the proper person(s) can be contacted.
- All children's hearing and vision should be screened annually.
- Each school must maintain health records. Within these records there should be a health history on each child and a permission slip for medication from the child's parent and physician if medication needs to be administered during school time. All medication must be in the original container.
- A parent are required to notify the school whenever a child will be absent or has a contagious disease, such as chicken pox, conjunctivitis, strep, etc. When a child has a contagious disease, he/she must be excluded from school.
- Parents should be informed of first aid, emergency, and fire drill procedures.
- Children who have been ill the night before school with vomiting, diarrhea, or fever must be home and healthy before returning to school.

### SAFETY PROCEDURES

- All classroom safety procedures follow the school's safety plan required of every school within the Diocese of Dallas
- Establish safety rules about common every day dangers: use of scissors, sharp objects, sticks, rocks, toys and the use of playground equipment, etc.
- Directions for evacuating the building in case of fire or other emergency must be posted in a prominent place. These evacuation procedures must be practiced frequently with the children. They should be in compliance with and part of the individual school's safety plan.
- Policies regarding field trips must be in place. Connecticut Statute "#14-100a (d) requires children under the age of four be in child restraint seats when traveling. Four-year-olds MUST be seated in the rear of the vehicle and MUST use a seat belt." Due to this law, the Office of Catholic Schools strongly recommends that you do not take field trips. However, we do advise you to contact organizations that would travel to your school and provide the students with new learning experiences on the premises. Also, if the technology of the school allows, students may take virtual field trips to a variety of locations.
- The staff needs to discuss safety precautions regarding toys. The following checklist is suggested:
  - Avoid toys that break easily
  - Avoid toys that can puncture
  - Avoid toys that can pinch
  - Avoid toys that can be swallowed
  - Avoid toys that can cause eye and ear injuries
  - Avoid toys that can cause bumps and bruises
  - Avoid toys that are toxic or unclean

## STANDARD 7: Families

**An effective early childhood program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child's family to foster children's development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.**

Partnership and Relationship with Parents

Communication:

- Communication is the scaffold to forming relationships with students' families. An effective early childhood program understands and values families through:
  - An understanding of the socioeconomic conditions of each family
  - Knowledge of each family's structure
  - An appreciation of relationships within the family
  - An awareness of family stresses
  - A support of the language spoken in the home
  - A celebration of the cultural values and ethnicity of the family
- An effective early childhood program creates respectful, reciprocal relationships
- Parents are partners in learning and should be encouraged to volunteer in appropriate classroom activities.
- Parent-teacher conferences should be scheduled at the beginning of school to discuss teacher observations of the child's growth in the program. They should be held again in the spring to discuss placement in the fall. Throughout the year, parents should be made to feel that they can conference with the teacher as needed.
- A bulletin board for parents should be visible. On this bulletin board the teacher should display the monthly calendar, a list of upcoming events for parent participation, classroom themes, snack assignments, and pictures of class and school activities.
- A monthly calendar should be published to keep parents informed about up-coming events so that parent participation will be insured.
- Parents should have a Handbook that establishes the rules, regulations, and policies of the program.

## **STANDARD 8: Communities**

**An effective early childhood program establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children's communities to support the achievement of program goals.**

Children of parochial schools are part of the parish and larger school communities. They should participate in prayer services and liturgies as appropriate. They should participate in service projects (cards and pictures for hospitals and nursing home, performances for senior citizens). The church should be used for instruction and prayer.

Early childhood programs should avail themselves of all community resources. If possible, students should visit or be visited by the local fire or police.

Participation in public library outreach programs is encouraged.

Children and their families should be familiar with local health resources.

## **STANDARD 9: Teaching**

**The program uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child's learning and development in the context of the program's curriculum goals.**

Teachers should use multiple instructional approaches to optimize children's opportunities for learning including strategies that range from structured to unstructured and adult –directed to child-directed

Teachers need to consider the variety of different background, interests, experiences, learning styles, needs, and capacities children bring to the learning environment when selecting and implementing instructional approaches.

They need to understand that instructional approaches differ in their effectiveness for teaching different elements of curriculum and learning.

## **STANDARD 10: Curriculum**

The program implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following domains: spiritual, aesthetic, cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical development.