

Wrap Around Care for Preschool Children



Since the New Jersey Supreme Court decision requiring the implementation of early childhood education programs in the Abbott school districts, and the ever increasing desire to implement universal pre-k programs in all school districts, the public schools are taking a larger role in providing Early Childhood Education for three and four year old children. Moving these young children from traditional community child care schedules into traditional public school day settings has created the need for extended or wrap around child care. Early childhood professionals have worked hard to reinforce the notion that three and four year old children are not just smaller versions of school age children. School Age Care Programs are expanding their scope to serve preschool children before and after the traditional school day. And, while the basic principles of good SAC apply to programs for preschoolers, some adjustments in thinking and approach are necessary to meet the different needs and abilities of preschool children.

Some of the questions for programs to consider are:

- How are 3's and 4's different from the 5 and older set?
- What changes need to be made in staffing and scheduling?
- How can we compliment the learning that has taken place during the day?
- How can we foster a sense of independence, confidence and a sense of control in children just beginning to develop these characteristics?
- What kind of behavior can we expect?
- What types of activities are best?

General Program Planning

Preschool children entering an after care program require more supervision and smaller group sizes than elementary school children, but the overall program and activities can be

very similar to programs designed for older children.

Preschool programs should, according to minimum New Jersey licensing standards:

Have a staff/child ratio of 1 to 12 for 4 year olds and 1 to 10 for 3 year olds, with a maximum group size of 20. Quality accreditation standards recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) range from ratios of 1:7 to 1:10 with a group size of 14 to 20 for three year olds, and 1:8 to 1:10 with a group size of 16 to 20 for four year olds. Young children respond best to small groups. Children should be assigned to small groups that have the same adult leadership each day. These groups may move to different activities together as a unit. Children at this age will feel more secure in these small groups as they adjust to moving from their preschool classroom to the after school program in a new setting with new adults and possibly new children. Groups can join together for whole group snack, movie times or outdoor free play. Multi-age grouping, or groups that span a large range of ages are not well suited for preschool children. They will have more positive experiences when grouped with children of about the same age. (see Appendix for Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education for description of traits of preschool children and appropriate practices for preschool children)

Program

The learning objectives of SAC programs differ from the specific curriculum provided during the school day. Giving children opportunities to interact in meaningful play with interesting and age appropriate materials will help children continue



photo by Sandy Sheard

to refine and increase their understanding of new experiences and ideas that they have explored during the day. Providing homework time is not an expectation of programs for three and four year olds.

The children in your program may have all attended the same program during the day or may be coming from a variety of settings. The Early Childhood Education program may have used a commercial curriculum or one that they developed themselves. In the Abbott districts in New Jersey, public schools are required to provide free preschool programs for three- and four-year olds. The programs must use a curriculum approved by the local school district..

Keeping in touch with the program and knowing what topic or theme they are studying will enable you to provide supplementary activities.

Providing materials and activities that are related to the theme used during the day will allow for a variety in your programming over the course of the year and reinforce the vocabulary, factual information and concepts that the children are exploring during the day.

Helping Children Learn

A teaching method very popular in the preschool community is Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding children's learning by providing questions and cues as they are working on tasks that are just beyond their current level of functioning (their Zone of Proximal Development). This technique is easily applied to an extended day program where direct instruction is not the primary goal. As staff supervise the children's play, they can ask questions that help the children discover new ways to do things. (see Appendix for [Scaffolding Children's Learning: Vygotsky and Early Childhood Education](#))

Providing Appropriate Activities

Preschool children will be similar to the older SAC children in transition to after school hours. Some will need

Sample Schedule

Decisions about scheduling should consider travel time from the preschool program, whether children arrive as a group or individually at staggered times, the type of activity that they children were involved in before leaving the preschool (did they just have a snack, were they sitting listening to a story or playing outside), and any other factors that may affect the type of activity that would be best for a smooth transition to the extended day program. Alternating between whole group and individual activities as well as between quiet, sit-down activities and active

Sample Schedule #1

Arrival, welcome by assigned family group staff member, sign-in.

15 – 25 minutes - Whole group snack – sit-down snack prepared and waiting at the table.

20 – 40 minutes - Individual – floor play with blocks, etc.

20 – 30 minutes - Whole group story, singing or game.

20 – 30 minutes - Individual quiet time listening to story or music tapes, reading books.

Dismissal - as parents arrive to pick up children

Sample Schedule # 2

Arrival, welcome by assigned family group staff member, sign-in.

15 – 25 minutes – Individual Table top manipulatives puzzles, matching games and snap-together toys.

15 – 25 minutes - Whole group snack – sit-down snack prepared and waiting at the table

20 – 30 minutes - Individual quiet time listening to story or music tapes, reading books.

20 – 30 minutes –Whole group outdoor or indoor games.

Dismissal - as parents arrive to pick up children.

Sample Schedule # 3

Arrival, welcome by assigned family group staff member, sign-in.

15 – 30 minutes – Individual choice of snack or table top toys.

20 – 30 minutes - Whole group story, singing or game.

20 – 40 minutes - Individual – floor play with blocks, etc.

20 – 30 minutes –Whole group outdoor or indoor games.

Dismissal - as parents arrive to pick up children

Preschool Development Continuum

Areas of Development	Traits					Implications for Caregivers
	3 yrs	3.5yrs	4yrs	4.5yrs	5yrs	
Social	Gaining greater control over emotions. Gaining a growing sense of identity and individuality. Will often defy directions to assert independence, but become easily upset at loss of adult approval.					Give choices & remain firm, calm & supportive
Emotional	Converse with other children during play (Associative Play)		Play near other children with similar toys (Parallel Play)		Engages in planned play with common goal & defined roles (Cooperative Play)	Model language- provide chances for solitary & social play
Fine Motor	Complete 6-8 piece puzzle. Builds tower of 4 blocks. Use blocks to make bridges, Roads & buildings. (Stage III)			Completes 10-12 piece puzzle. Builds tower of 6 or more blocks. Builds enclosures for people & animals. (Stage IV)		Large block area promotes low, spreading structures; small area promotes tall, apartment-like structures.
Language	Describes actions. States feelings. May exhibit pronunciation errors. Frequently Asks Who?, What? Where? & Why?			Explains reasons for actions. Explains reasons for actions. Most pronunciation errors have disappeared.		Restate and expand their phrases. Model problem solving language. Show Patience!
Cognitive	Repeats patterns, classifies, seriates, recalls sequence of events. Follows simple directions. Describes characteristics of objects.			Follows 3 to 4 step directions. Compares objects.		Provide many chances to play with real objects to promote language and use of symbols
Gross Motor	Hops on one foot 3 times. Catches large ball. Runs, climbs stairs Throws ball overhand.			Stands on one foot five seconds. Catches ball away from body Hops, skips, gallops Throws beanbag at target 5 feet away.		Informal play activities allow for wide differences in abilities.
Creativity	Draws recognizable face & stick body. Explores use of colors & shapes for own sake.			Draws complete face with ears, hair, etc Draws body with many parts. Draws houses, trees, etc.		Provide process activities that encourage exploring with many media.



photo by Sandy Sheard

time to relax and unwind from a very busy day, others will need an immediate energy outlet and still others will be looking for their snack. They need quiet places to lie on a carpet or relax in beanbag chair with age appropriate books or chat with a friend. They will enjoy drawing, painting, playing with clay and/or exploring other art materials. They will not need teacher directed projects to get them involved, but may need suggestions to focus on an activity. Their natural curiosity and sense of wonder at what they can do will draw them into these activities. Given a sense of security and interesting materials, they will create for the pure pleasure of the experience and they will have pride in their accomplishments. Adult reactions to these accomplishments are most meaningful when they reflect on the process and elicit verbal exchanges. For further discussion of ways to encourage creativity in the art area, see pages 177 to 181 in [The Creative Curriculum](#). (see Appendix)

Activities for the extended day for preschool:

- Snack
- Table top manipulatives - puzzles, matching games and snap-together toys.
- Floor play – blocks, wooden trains and large piece puzzles.
- Art – simple inexpensive materials such as recycled

paper, crayons, markers and glue.

- Quiet time - for being read to, or reading age appropriate books.
- Active play – indoor and outdoor games, exercises, singing, marching and dancing.

Activity structure for the extended day for preschool:

- Individual activities – the children in a family group participate in the same type of activity in a designated area, but each child chooses the type of toy or materials to in the area and constructs, designs or draws on his own or with one or two other children.
- Large Group – groups join together for movies, speakers, parties, outdoor free play or other occasional special activities.
- Whole Group – a group participates in an organized teacher directed activity. NOTE: Teacher dominated activities should be kept to a minimum.

Behavior

Self-control and cooperative play skills are emerging in preschool children. Refining these behaviors is a learning process that can be facilitated with support

modeling and reinforcement. Clear rules, consistent schedules, choice of interesting, engaging activities and close adult supervision are essential when working with young children. Three-year olds particularly may revert to more babyish behaviors under the stress of unpredictable changes in program and personnel.

Involve the children in making rules for the classroom. Display a few basic rules with a drawing or photograph next to each. Use positive statements that describe what TO DO rather than what not to do. Discuss what you and the children mean by cooperative play, sharing and “inside voices.” Determine times when formal turn taking is appropriate such as for use of the computer, and when a more informal problem solving approach will be used. With adult help, most play situations can be resolved through discussion. Learning to think of alternate things to do while they wait for a turn to play with the blocks, thinking about how the other child might feel and finding innovative solutions are important skills that preschoolers need practice and some guidance to develop. More than one of the popular toys or activities should be available to help ease in the concept of sharing.

Early Intervention Programs

Local school districts are required to provide early intervention screening and programs for preschool children with special needs. If the child is in a school classroom during the day, any special needs should be recognized there and the child referred for additional services. If you discover what appears to be delayed development or socialization, contact the local school district for assistance in receiving the appropriate referrals for the child.

It is important to remember that preschool children do and will respond differently, not just from older school age children, but also differently from their peers. This is such an important time in their lives, when their young foundations are being established. They have started the path to positive young children and productive adults.

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Appendix

Professional Books

Berk, Laura E. & Winsler, Adam Scaffolding Children's Learning: Vygotsky and Early Childhood Education. NAEYC www.NAEYC.org

Bredenkamp, Sue & Cople, Carol Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education NAEYC www.NAEYC.org

Dodge, Diane Tristor & Colker, Laura A. The Creative Curriculum Teaching Strategies www.teachingstrategies.com

Sample Suggested Activities for 3's & 4's

Paper Piece Sculpture, p 63

Kohl, Mary Ann. Math Arts Gryphon House, 1996

Scoops and tennis balls, pp. 59-60
Thompson, Myra K. Jump For Joy Parker Publishers

School Map Puzzle, p 224
Charner, Kathy. Everything For Winter, Activity Book Gryphon House

NonCompetitive Musical Chairs, p 49
Stone, Janet I. Hands-On Math Scott Foresman & Co.

Name Scroll, p 23
Gaylord, Susan Multicultural Books to Make & Share Scholastic

Splatter Bon Greetings, p 98
Song Birds, p 67
Quilt Stories, p 51
Celebrating Diversity Teacher Created Materials, Inc.

Fruit Pizza, p 118
Sernett, Lisa Big Book of Everything for Kindergarten Instructional Four, Inc. Grand Rapids MI
Pop Corn Balls, p 33
Chinese Circle, pp. 54-55
Matiella, Ana The Multicultural Caterpillar ETR Associates. Santa Cruz, CA

All of these books are available at the LRC North in East Orange, 973-414-4491, a Department of Education resource center for Special Education that includes many materials suitable for all children. Membership in the LRC is \$2.00 per year for teachers or parents.

Many may be available at the other LRC's in Central (732-441-0061) and Southern New Jersey (856-582-700).