



Family Circle is a free-choice, play-based Learning Center!

What does this mean?

Play-based learning “is...a context for learning through which children organize and make sense of their social worlds as they actively engage with people, objects, and representations” (EYLF, 2009, p. 46).

Children are encouraged to choose the toys, books, games, and activities which appeal to them, and are not required to complete written work. Instead, academic enrichment is integrated into the activities that our center offers, and children are free to develop their own interests. It means that while you may not see your children coming home with traditional worksheets, you will often see artwork and other creations, and can rest assured that education is central to our center’s vision.

Why does Family Circle choose this philosophy?

Play-based learning goes hand-in-hand with our whole-child philosophy: it supports children as they develop a positive self-concept, gain independence and self-help skills, express their creativity, and acquire social-emotional skills vital to kindergarten readiness.

According to Scots College’s Arina Aktova, “Research has explored the importance of play for a child’s overall development and we know that play is closely associated with the development of intellectual skills, thinking and motivation.”

What do children learn in the different free-choice areas?

We want Family Circle to be a fun and entertaining place that your child loves to visit, but that’s not the only reason for our variety of play options! Each of the classrooms’ distinct areas supports children’s development as they learn the following:

Art

- Creativity through open-ended, unstructured projects emphasizing process over product
- Positive self-esteem through the successful manipulation of a variety of materials
- Sensory stimulation with wide a variety of art media
- Visual discrimination skills: selection of shapes, choosing colors, and determining sizes
- Fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Recognizing others’ points of view and valuing diversity of opinion
- Self-expression!

Nature and Science

- Observation skills and basic reasoning
- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Positive self-concept through making sense of the world in which they live
- Appreciation for the environment and living things
- Understanding of life-cycles and cause-and-effect relationships
- Sensory skills as they question and investigate
- Vocabulary development and experience exploring and using new terminology

Language and Literacy

- Alphabet, phonics, decoding, reading
- Writing, spelling, grammar
- Model of standard speech
- Listening skills; desire for knowledge
- Communication of ideas through print
- Fine motor skills; hand-eye coordination
- Left to right orientation skills
- Appreciation of literature, language, and different writing styles; exposure to new ideas

Music and Movement

- Perception of rhythm and language
- Opportunities for the release of physical energy
- Fine motor skills; hand-eye coordination
- Gross motor skills, balance
- Sensory skills and heightened awareness
- Listening, curiosity, willingness to try new things
- Creative expression, originality

Dramatic Play and Dollhouse

- Language development; increased communication and conversation skills
- Enhanced self-worth via role playing
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Problem-solving and decision-making
- Desired behaviors and standard manners
- Difference between fantasy and reality

Blocks

- Fine motor skills; hand-eye coordination
- Math concepts: classification, size, shape, weight, balance
- Social-emotional growth
- Creativity

Math and Manipulatives

So instead of asking your children “What did you learn today?,” try asking them **“What did you play?”**

- Counting and numeracy, value
- Sequential perception skills (first, second, last, etc.); sorting and patterning
- Spatial relationships (over, next to, below, etc.); structure and design
- Awareness of sets and grouping
- Tactile discrimination
- Visual memory and recall
- Left to right orientation skills
- Similar, different; matching, opposites

Toys and Games

- Cooperation: turn-taking, rule-following
- Fair play and standard manners
- Ethical behavior and responsibility
- Problem-solving and decision-making
- Creativity in reasoning and problem-solving
- Fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination
- Sensory and perception skills
- Prediction, strategy, planning
- Persistence in mastering new things

Sand and Water Tables

- Observation and creative thinking
- Sinking, floating, volume, changes in state
- Sensory skills through tactile experiences
- Fine and gross motor skills; hand-eye coordination
- Social skills: cooperation, communication

Outdoors and Playground

- Heightened sensory awareness opportunity
- Appreciation for the natural world
- Social capabilities: fair play, listening
- Motor skills and physical play, exercise
- Importance of an active, healthy lifestyle
- Respect for others’ abilities, tolerance



The most effective
kind of education is
that a child should
play amongst lovely
things.

- Plato



"Play is the
highest form of
research."

Albert
Einstein

[for teachers]

Questions to ask kids in ART

Questions to ask kids in NATURE/SCIENCE and OUTDSIDE

(etc., use EA requirements, e.g. nature "Do you see the bird/squirrel/butterfly/bee? What is it doing? Why do you think it's doing that?")

[for children]

What I learn when I play in the ART area....