

Director's Desk

The Scoop on Center Time



What's the Standard?

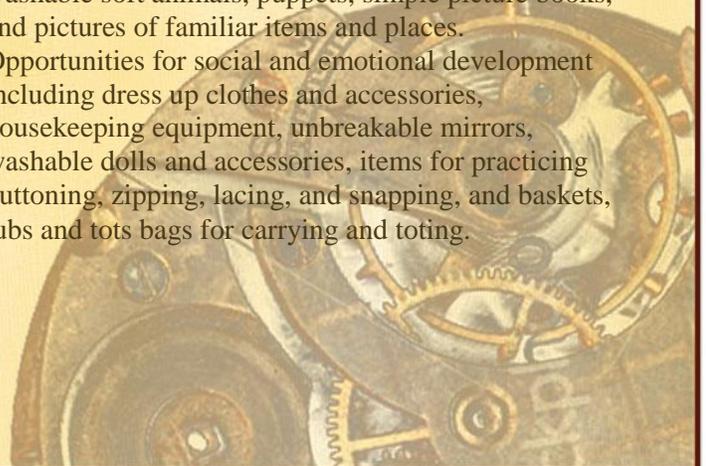
Infant Care Requirements

- Opportunities for outdoor play
- Opportunities for reaching, grasping, pulling up, creeping, crawling, and walking
- Opportunities for visual stimulation including large pictures of faces and familiar objects, simple, soft, washable books and toys, unbreakable mirrors, mobiles, brightly colored crib sheets.
- Opportunities for auditory stimulate including verbal communication, soothing music, and musical or sounding toys.
- Opportunities for sensory stimulation including surfaces, fabrics, textured toys, washable dolls, and toy animals.
- Opportunities for small muscle including busy boxes, rattles, teething, grasping toys, shaking or squeezing toys, or cloth toys.
- Opportunities for large muscle including blankets for floor time, crib and play gyms, variety of light weight balls, and pillows or supportive equipment for those learning to sit up.



Toddler Care Requirements

- Opportunities for outdoor time
- Opportunities for thinking skills and sensory development including shape/item sorting toys, stacking or nesting toys, puzzles, washable board books, washable blocks, and snapping and take apart toys.
- Opportunities for small muscle development including large-size washable crayons and markers, variety of paper and art materials, table or easel for art, large paintbrushes, non-toxic play dough, large-sized washable toy transportation vehicles, toy animals, and toy people.
- Opportunities for large muscle development including low climbing structures, small riding toys, toys for pushing or pulling, a variety of light weight balls for interior and outdoor play and rhythm instruments.
- Opportunities for active play including music, songs, simple games, and dramatic or imaginary play that encourage movement such as dancing, running, climbing, stretching, walking, and marching.
- Opportunities for language development including washable soft animals, puppets, simple picture books, and pictures of familiar items and places.
- Opportunities for social and emotional development including dress up clothes and accessories, housekeeping equipment, unbreakable mirrors, washable dolls and accessories, items for practicing buttoning, zipping, lacing, and snapping, and baskets, tubs and tots bags for carrying and toting.



A chance to play outdoors every day helps keep children healthy. Fresh air in a large space contains fewer germs. Outdoor play also provides a wider variety of opportunities for sensory stimulation through sounds, smells, and textures and is supported by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

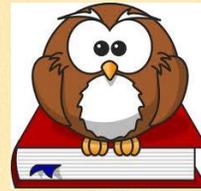
Pre Kindergarten Care requirements

- Opportunities for outdoor time
- Opportunities for thinking skills and sensory development including sand/water play, blocks, framed puzzles, large stringing beads, and simple board games.
- Opportunities for small muscle development including large non-toxic crayons, markers, paint, water colors, brushes, adjustable easels, collage materials, chalkboard, clay dough and tools, workbench and accessories, round end scissors, glue, paste, different types of music and videos, rhythm instruments, and finger plays.
- Opportunities for large muscle development including small wagons, light weight balls, small wheel barrows, tricycles, push toys, swings, slides, climbing equipment, balance beams, hanging bars, and outdoor building materials.
- Opportunities for language development including flannel board stories, puppets, storybooks, writing materials, and stories on tape.
- Opportunities for social/emotional development including dress up clothes and accessories, mirrors, dolls, simple props for different themes, puppets, transportation toys, play animals and table games.

School Age Children Care Requirements

- Opportunities for outdoor time
- Opportunities for thinking skills and sensory development including sand and water play, construction materials, puzzles, pattern making materials, games, rules, tape measures, microscopes, books and magazines
- Opportunities for small muscle development including art and craft materials, paints, markers, colored pencils, crayons, clay, weaving, music and musical instruments of all types, and cd players
- Opportunities for large muscle development including active games, dance and creative movement, dramatic and imaginary play that encourages running, stretching, climbing and walking.
- Opportunities for social emotional development including dolls, realistic accessories, role play materials, costumes, disguise materials, puppets, transportation toys, play and art materials, nature materials and human and animal figurines.

The Scoop #1:Book Center



The language/literacy area is a focal point of literacy learning in the classroom. The main centers, library, writing, and listening, should remain in this area throughout the year. Books and materials should be rotated within these centers to support and encourage exploration of different themes or topics of interest.

Goals:

Activities in the literacy area support children's imagination and creativity. They learn about the importance of print as a means for communicating and gaining information. They are exposed to new ideas and experiences when they read and explore different literary genres, including stories, poems, fairytales, and informational text.

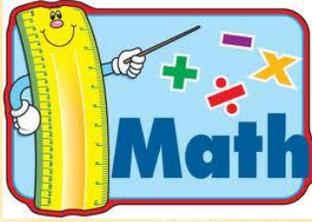
In the literacy area children have the opportunity to develop core literacy concepts such as oral language, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, concepts of books, and alphabet knowledge. Listening and thinking skills are enhanced as they listen and tell and retell stories. When children participate in activities in the literacy area they are developing a love for books and stories, which will support their learning throughout their lives.

Equipment:

To make this an inviting and comfortable area for children to get cozy with books, offer lots of soft pillows or beanbags. There should be carpeting or a rug in this area. Books should be displayed on open faced shelves so children can see what books they are choosing from. Other books can be placed in themed bins and located on child accessible shelves as well. It is nice to have a child sized table and chairs for the children to sit at and read, listen to books on CD/tape, or work on file folder games. If you include a writing center in this area, it is a good idea to offer a separate table for this center.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children reports that a learning environment that supports child initiated activities and individual learning styles fosters confidence and curiosity in the child.

The Scoop #2: Math Center



Goals:

The Math and Number Concepts Area encourages exploration of concepts related to math, as well as, literacy. During exploration with toys, games, and other tools found in this area, children are opening themselves up for many literacy rich activities. They are able to practice counting, sequencing, matching, sorting, and classifying, all of which support their literacy development as they sharpen their visual discrimination skills, and build their understanding of important concepts used for comprehension and reading. Children are exposed to print and use language when they manipulate a range of different games, toys, and puzzles found in this area.

Area:

The Math and Number center should be located in an area with nearby shelving to store games, counters, and other math items.

Equipment:

A table for playing games and doing counting activities is an important feature of this area. Also, storage shelves and bins for holding counters and other math supplies is about all you will need. Optional equipment would be to have a dry erase board for children to write on.

Supplies:

The materials found in this area can be changed to compliment different themes or units being studied as well as continually being stocked with new games, toys and puzzles that interest the children.

Tips:

Store counters in clear bins with picture labels on them. This makes clean up a snap.
Clean, clear peanut butter jars make great estimation jars, and help reduce garbage!

The Scoop #3: Art Center

Art is important for children's creative development, as well as, all other aspects of development. Specifically it enhances their literacy development by allowing them to reflect and expand on stories, create their own stories, and develop their creative and emotional expression in a safe and accepting environment. This is an important part of learning how to express themselves and to communicate. When children engage in art activities they are using fine motor skills, which enhances writing skills. Describing artwork also helps children develop verbal communication and comprehension skills. The art center should be open to the children every day. A wide variety of supplies and materials are available for the children to use in their creative processes.

Goals:

In the art area children are given the opportunities to learn important art concepts and creativity as well as to practice decision making, learn about cause and effect, identify colors and shapes, refine hand-eye coordination, develop small and large muscle skills, express feelings, practice sharing, experience pride, and much more! Of course this is great fun for children to do but what they are learning are actually very transferable skills for the future. These activities will help the children grow into fully rounded individuals.

Equipment:

Equipment you may wish to offer in the art area are a child sized table and chairs, a drying rack or place to hang finished art that needs to dry, and easel space. Easels can be made or purchased. Try using wall space and adding a dry erase board with clips to serve as easel space.

Supplies:

Art supplies you will want to offer should include materials for painting, drawing, pasting/gluing, and sculpting or molding. Other materials may need to be purchased for specific activities you may wish to offer.

Some programs offer the art area as a free choice area for the children to use at their own discretion. Other programs may offer a specific "project" to do in the art area with a teacher working directly with the children. Still others may try to offer a little of both.

Remember "It 's the Process, Not the Product" that is important when young children explore art.

The Scoop #4: Science

This is a very hands-on area. It provides materials for children to discover, explore, evaluate and draw conclusions. This area leaves room for many centers that open the door to literacy. The centers consist of on going research that focuses on instruction, sequencing, classifying and recording. Literacy skills are practiced as children evaluate and reflect on different science activities they are engaged in. Children can journal their findings and discoveries, and practice making predictions and inferences, which are critical in developing comprehension skills used in reading.

Goals:

In the science/discovery area children are able to explore new topics of interest, learn about the world around them, and develop their problem solving skills. They get to WONDER about things! They practice observation skills using their five senses, learn about cause and effect, making predictions, and begin to learn some basic science concepts.

Equipment:

The equipment you need for this area depends on the kinds of activities you wish to offer. Some science/discovery areas are more of just an observation type center so you may wish to have a display table, aquarium, and various clear containers for specimens. Other science/discovery areas may have more hands on activities that require a work table or more options for exploration. If you combine the science area with a discovery area you may want to include a sand/water table. Something that can be filled with dirt, sand, and other messy materials.

Supplies:

Stock your science/discovery area with anything you can find that deals with science, exploring the senses, and the natural world. Decide how you will display items, some programs have them out all the time other choose to rotate items relevant to their units of study. You can create specific centers and rotate materials weekly or monthly.

The Scoop #5: Puzzles and Games



If you have room setting up a separate area for puzzles, games, and manipulatives is a great idea. You can stock it with many great products. Often times this area is combined with the Math and Number Area because many of the activities offered in both areas can be integrated with each other. However, if you are fortunate enough to have the space, it would be nice to set up a separate area for these fine motor development activities.

Goals:

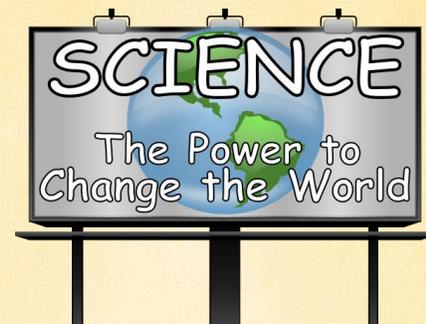
Puzzles, games, and manipulatives offer children lots of practice with fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and logical thinking skills. These all help promote language, literacy, and fine motor development.

Area:

To help keep this area organized label toys and store materials in see through bins or bags with pictures of what materials belong in them on the outside. This helps children when it is time to clean up and it build categorization skills. This area can be full of literacy rich centers as well.

Supplies:

Stock this area with puzzles, small blocks and counters, lacing cards, and other toys that build small muscle skills.



The Scoop #6: Blocks and Building

In the block and building area children's literacy development is supported and encouraged as they explore and manipulate a variety of blocks, building materials, and other related items. Children use language to communicate with other children and teachers as they explain, share, and describe their activities in this area. Also they engage in independent and group play and practice socially acceptable ways to express their thoughts and feelings as they learn to share and cooperating with others.

Children use and develop their small and large muscle skills and their hand and eye coordination, important for later writing abilities. Cognitively they develop an understanding of concepts such as measurement, classifying, and sequencing which are concepts used in understanding and comprehending when children read. Children begin to predict cause-and-effect relationships and engage in problem solving activities, which are also important aspects of reading comprehension.

Goals:

In the Block & Building area children have the opportunity to develop many cognitive skills as they experiment with the size, shape, color, number, and volume of the materials in this area. They test physics principles when they build skyscrapers and bridges carefully balancing each block they add to their design. They practice social skills when they share, negotiate for materials, and collaborate with other children. Symbolic thinking is developed as they create models of architectural elements from their world. Vocabularies expand and literacy learning is enhanced when children talk and write about their creations. So much learning can take place in one little area.

Area:

The Block & Building Area is usually a place of hustle and bustle and should be placed in an area where it will not disturb other quiet activities like the library or reading area. There should be ample low shelving for materials that are clearly labeled so children are able to be responsible for returning materials on their own. A nice big rug in the area is useful to create a kind of boundary for this area. Often it is helpful to surround this area on three sides to discourage other children from walking through the area and disturbing the masterpieces in progress.



Equipment:

Special equipment for this area is usually not necessary other than shelving. Some nice pieces to have however are a low table for building with interlocking block type toys or for using with train construction sets.

Supplies:

Typical materials found in this area are a variety of blocks, toy cars, trucks, and toy vehicles, road signs, toy people, animals, and other props. Blocks can be made and purchased but must be checked for quality and safety. Cardboard boxes can be used to make large blocks, stuff them with newspaper and cover them with brown paper bags or other wrapping paper. Wood scraps that have been sanded smooth also make nice inexpensive blocks.



The Scoop #7: Music and Movement

Music & Movement plays an important part of every early childhood environment.

Some programs choose to have an interest area or center dedicated to music and movement others make it a part of their daily routine. However you use music and movement activities in your program they are a wealth of resources out there to enhance children's learning and development.

The Scoop #8: Outdoors

Goals:

Outdoor play offers many important learning opportunities for children. Outside kids can gain a deeper appreciation for nature. They get exercise, essential for developing their large and small muscles, which effects their motor control. They practice skills like hand-eye coordination, which later influences their writing development. They develop positive social skills as they play with their peers and gain a feeling of self-worth and a healthy self-esteem from mastering the challenges outdoor play and equipment can offer.

Area:

The outdoor play area must be a safe area for kids to play and explore. Often times a fenced in area is essential. Playground equipment should be of the highest quality and be checked daily for hazards such as broken pieces. Check with your local licensing agencies for specific playground requirements. If you are in a home environment be sure you have anchored swing sets, etc. Check with the manufactures of your home equipment for important safety requirements.

It is nice to have grassy areas, as well as, a sand play area. A garden for the kids to grow things in would be an especially nice addition to this area.

Equipment:

Playground Equipment comes in all kinds of varieties. Shop around and make sure you are purchasing quality safe equipment.

Supplies:

Other supplies to have for outdoors include play houses, jump ropes, balls, sand toys, hula hoops, and anything else that encourages safe active play!

Tips:

Keep sand boxes covered if possible to prevent unwanted animals from using them. If you do not have access to a sand box bring your discovery table outside filled with sand.

Easels can be brought outside for some creative painting fun too.

Be sure children understand outdoor play rules! Set up clear consistent rules the children can remember. Tell the kids what they CAN DO, rather than what they can't. For example, say "You can play on the grass." Instead of, "Don't go in the road." Say, "You can slide down the slides and climb up the ladders." Instead of, "Don't climb on the slide." Children will have a better understanding of what they can do and will be more likely to follow the rules.

The Full Scoop: At Faith Academy



Having children engaged in various activities and centers throughout the day not only aids in the child's development but also cuts down on behaviors issues throughout the day. When children are left to their own devices you can bet that things will go awry. Being active is a big part of the day for children enrolled at Faith Academy. When children are not working on school work the children should be engaged in a center. Centers vary from classroom to classroom along with center rules. Throughout the course of the day children should have time in each center in addition to completing their school work.

Basic Center rules:

- Ask permission before getting a center out.
- Clean up after yourself before leaving a center.
- Center toys must stay in that center.
- If children are having a hard time following classroom rules, they should relocate to another center.
- Each center should be cleaned before leaving the room for any reason.
- No more than three children located in a center at a time. The classroom can have 4 active centers as long as it is structured and following classroom rules.
- Each child should get each center by the end of the day.