

# **Curriculum Framework**

## ***Vision Statement***

Small Faces is the community leader in family focused child care.

## ***Education Mission***

Small Faces Child Development Center is a child centered school that provides preschool and school age children in the northwest neighborhoods of Seattle, a welcoming community where their social, emotional, physical and intellectual skills are creatively nurtured. We provide safe, stable care for working families or families who want to encourage their children's development in a setting that honors diversity and respects the environment.

## ***Purposeful Play – A Philosophy of Education at Small Faces***

### **What is purposeful play?**

Play is something every human understands, but a term which is hard to define. Play is a quality of intensity and joy in an activity. Play transforms the everyday into the extraordinary. Play enhances and heightens an experience, setting it into the mind and making it a part of ourselves. This is the quality that makes play most fascinating. Play is a form of learning, and for children as well as adults, Learning is Play. At Small Faces we believe that play is the most important way children interact with their environment and create knowledge.

The staff of Small Faces is charged with facilitating, participating in, observing, documenting and reflecting on play. The presence of trained staff gives play an explicit purpose whose goal is to encourage the Social-Emotional, Physical, Creative and Cognitive development of the children in our care. As a facilitator and participant in play, staff at Small Faces design rich environments and engage in activities with children, guiding and encouraging play without controlling it. The staff of Small Faces observes, documents and reflects upon children at play to better plan and design future elements of curriculum for both individuals and groups.

Part of each day at Small Faces is dedicated to unstructured play. While the importance of structured play is easily recognized, we believe that unstructured play is essential to the development of young children. A study by the American Academy of Pediatrics, "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds" (Ginsburg, 2006) states: "free and unstructured play is healthy and - in fact - essential for helping children reach important social, emotional, and cognitive developmental milestones as well as helping them manage stress and become resilient."

## **How does Purposeful Play relate to the curriculum?**

Small Faces' curriculum grows and changes to reflect the current best practices in Early Childhood Education. The curriculum is refined through a system of reflection, continuing education, assessment and redefinition. The curriculum is rooted in Purposeful Play, the belief that young children will learn willingly when they are stimulated through experiences which are interesting to them and when they are able to integrate knowledge of their own world through play activities.

Building the philosophy begins with reflection on how best to educate young children, based on the personal experience, training and education of our expert staff. This process led to our philosophy's theoretical roots in Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, Piaget's stages of cognitive development, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and the approach to education associated with the schools of Reggio Emilia in Italy. Together these theories form a view of Early Childhood Education that is child centered, connected with family and community, observation rich and designed to help children achieve competency in age appropriate key concept areas through play, exploration and expression in a manner that encompasses all of the ways in which we express our intelligence.

The second step of the process involves continuous research and continuing education. Through teacher trainings, classes, weekly staff meetings and personal study, the staff add to and change the curriculum to fit the needs of the current students. North Seattle Community College Professor Tom Drummond's 15 Capabilities and components of the Creative Curriculum approach have all been recently used to further refine the Small Faces Philosophy of Purposeful Play.

The Philosophy guides our curriculum and the everyday education of the children at Small Faces. The director and staff members are engaged in constant assessment of the success of the curriculum, through informal discussions, written assessments and assessments provided by the City of Seattle and Washington State childcare.

As this process continues, the curriculum at Small Faces is refined and redefined in an ongoing effort to create a quality childcare environment where young children find success and learn through purposeful play.

## **Celebrating Diversity in Education**

At Small Faces, we believe that diversity of people, culture, opinions, beliefs and lifestyles provide the rich base from which children's understanding of themselves, the world around them and democratic ideals about society grow. Small Faces is dedicated to creating a truly diverse education for young children and to promoting the changes necessary to achieve a truly diverse and democratic society.

In pursuit of these ideals we set the following goals to fight prejudice, celebrate diversity and work to end racism in both the center and the community of Small Faces.

### ***Anti Bias Goals***

Small Faces Child Development Center is committed to providing an anti-bias environment for children and adults to enjoy. We value and celebrate diversity among genders, lifestyles, physical abilities, religions, and cultures. At Small Faces we:

- Nurture each child's construction of a knowledgeable, confident self-identity and group identity. Teach your child about their culture. Take them to events celebrating their culture. Bring information about your family culture to the classroom.
- Promote each child's comfortable, empathetic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Foster each child's critical thinking about bias.
- Cultivate each child's ability to stand up for her / himself and others in the face of bias.

From *Anti Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* by Louise Derman-Sparks

### ***Cultural Diversity Goals***

In the classrooms of Small Faces, we strive to:

- Build a sense of the group as a community, bringing each child's home culture and language into the shared culture of the school so each child feels accepted and gains a sense of belonging.
- Provide books, materials, images, and experiences that reflect diverse cultures that children may not likely see, as well as those that represent their family life and cultural group.
- Initiate discussions and activities to teach and respect an appreciation for similarities and differences among people.
- Talk positively about each child's physical characteristics, family, and cultural heritage.
- Cook or serve foods from children's various contemporary cultures.
- Avoid stereotyping any group through materials, objects, and language.
- Invite families' participation in all aspects of the program.
- Take trips to museums and cultural resources in the community.
- Infuse all curriculum topics with diverse cultural perspectives, avoiding a tourist approach.

From NAEYC position paper on multicultural education

### ***Anti Racism Goals***

At Small Faces we will:

- Engage in continuous discussion about the instances of institutionalized racism, either intentional or incidental, present in the policies and procedures of the center.
- Strive not only to eradicate institutionalized racism from the policies and procedures of the center, but to enact policies and procedures whose goal is to counteract the effects of institutionalized racism in U.S. society.
- Be actively involved in the fight against institutionalized racism in our community.

Families are invited to contribute in ways they feel comfortable to assist the Center in meeting these goals.

## **Classroom Curriculums**

The Tree Frogs, Rainforest, Under the Sea, Mountain, Kangaroo and Discovery curriculums will provide experiences for the development of sensory awareness and discrimination, language skills, literacy development, eye-hand coordination, ability to manipulate different materials, creativity, problem solving, willingness to discover and experiment, and awareness of cause and effect.

The Big Kids and Discovery Before and After School programs are designed to complement the elementary school experience by: providing opportunities for self guided exploration of their artistic, physical and intellectual interests; introducing children to new ideas and skill sets in pursuit of those interests; providing a rich, varied, environment free from the pressures of testing and grading. During the summer, school age programs offer field trips and sensory rich activities and experiences to take advantage of the longer days.

### **Basic characteristics of our childcare program:**

- Provides a rich and varied learning experience.
- Staffed by warm, caring, informed and trained adults.
- Provides an environment that is safe and age-appropriate as well as attractive. In order to promote learning and healthy development.
- Provides opportunities for rest, relaxation, recreation and exercise.
- Helps the child become a happy, social, self-confident person.
- Ensures that the child feels accepted and cared for by people he/she can trust.
- Provides experiences that allow children to learn about the varying lifestyles of the people around them.
- Respects the religious traditions of our families and staff without a focus on any one religious tradition.

### ***Key Areas of Content in Our Early Education Classrooms***

Following is a list of ten key content areas which are the basis of our daily curriculum planning and assessment of children's progress in our program.

1. **Social-Emotional:** The children accept school as a place where they can feel secure, cared for, liked, accepted, and successful while away from home. The children learn that adults are loving, helpful, trustworthy people who are interested in providing materials and experiences for them. The children discover themselves as independent people - worthwhile, competent, and important. Children learn unbiased gender differences and identify with their own gender. The children come to recognize feelings and learn to express themselves in socially acceptable ways. They begin to use experiences, materials, and language to express and alleviate feelings. The children develop social skills through interactions with others. They learn to take turns, share, and modify behaviors to fit the group. They learn to give and receive affection and grow in understanding of feelings and rights of others.

2. **Physical:** The children have many opportunities to develop both large and small muscle coordination. Developing fine motor skills are part of weekly planning goals. Going outside to work large muscles is available several times a day.
3. **Language:** The children develop conceptual and verbal skills through awareness and understanding of the world around them. We provide many opportunities to develop vocabulary through group discussions, individual conversations and story times. Children grow in understanding and use of language. Children's home language is supported through language activities.
4. **Literacy:** Our classrooms provide many examples of the uses of print every day. All rooms have library centers and reading to children is part of every day. Materials for children to attempt writing are readily available. Children are given opportunities to develop phonological abilities with rhyming activities, letters and their sounds.
5. **Math:** Activities that cover the five basic concepts of math, as described by the National Council of Mathematics, are planned for every week. Materials that encourage mathematical thinking are always available in the room.
6. **Science:** The children expand their curiosity, initiative, and creativity through first-hand experiences and a variety of interesting materials. Science curriculum always includes properties of matter, life cycles of creatures, earth and sky and health and nutrition.
7. **Technology:** The children are introduced to the use of modern technology as tools in pursuit of learning through play. Computers, cameras (still and video), tape recorders and microphones are used to explore the world and create original film, music and writing.
8. **Creative Expression:** Art, music and drama and dance are planned for every week. Art projects are open ended allowing the children to produce their own unique interpretation.
9. **Health:** Curriculum includes information on nutrition and exercise to help the children develop habits of good health. We will help children achieve independence in situations like eating, dressing, toileting, and resting. Good safety practices for school and home are covered continuously.
10. **Social Studies:** Teachers plan weekly activities that help the children learn about themselves, their community and the world. Special consideration is given to the home cultures of the children. Activities that promote anti-bias are emphasized.

## **Classroom Environment**

While classroom setup is determined by the individual staff members in a given room, there are several features which are a part of every classroom. The way that a classroom is set up and the teaching style within that classroom are reflections of Small Faces' Philosophy of Education and the Key Content Areas. Following are aspects of design considered best practice at Small Faces Child Development Center:

### ***Key Concepts***

The design of classrooms at Small Faces revolves around five key concepts.

**Community:** The classroom is a place where we can celebrate and explore the diversity of families and communities that we experience in our daily lives, and those that exist in other parts of the world. To this end, classrooms have pictures and artifacts representing the students and their families as well as depicting a range of cultures, abilities, and people from around the world.

**Child-Centricity:** Classroom furniture and setup are designed to make the room accessible to children and encourage their self help skills. Furniture is child sized. Manipulatives and art supplies are placed on low shelves and accessible to children. Pictures and objects around the room are placed at the eye level of children.

**Ownership:** The classroom environment represents the interests and work of the children, families and staff. Children's art and creations are displayed throughout. The interests and cultures of the children inform the curriculum and the content of the Learning Centers.

**Stability:** Daily routine and consistent limits give children a sense of stability from which they can explore their environment with confidence. To this end, daily schedules and weekly goals are posted in the room or on the doors. Visual clues help children remember limits set by the teacher (for example: purple baskets contain manipulatives that may be used after snack).

**Safety:** Classrooms are setup with the safety of children and adults in mind. Small Faces is compliant with State of Washington and City of Seattle safety requirements. We do our best to protect children from preventable harm while they are in our care.

### ***Learning Centers***

Small Faces Child Development Center classrooms are divided into Learning Centers. Children select from among the various learning centers during free choice time. Learning Centers are based on the idea of multiple intelligences as first described by Howard Gardner. The goal of Learning Centers is to provide a consistent flow to the classroom that children can depend on. Learning Centers should be set up in such a way that children are responsible for the care of the equipment and for the output from the center. Loose objects and creative supplies will provide an atmosphere of creativity with limitless possibilities. The other benefit of learning centers for teachers is that they

provide a platform for gradual change within a familiar set up. At any time the contents of the area may be changed while keeping the theme of the center. In the same way one center may be switched out for another, though changing too often or all at once may be difficult for children who need a sense of stability in order to learn well.

**Art:** Accessible and well stocked with variety of drawing tools, paper, scissors and collage materials. Special art projects are planned for free choice periods, projects are open ended and allow children to create their own products. Easels for painting are always part of art centers.

**Dramatic Play:** Set aside for play that uses props for pretend play. Center is changed regularly to give the children a wide range of choices from grocery stores to fire stations to kitchens.

**Library:** Has comfortable seating and shelves where books face forward. There are a variety of books including ones showing the cultures of the children and the community, picture books, science books and books on the current curriculum themes. All books are screened for biases.

**Music:** Music is encouraged throughout the day, with instruments, singing, and dancing possible during free choice play. The daily routine includes a group music time. Music from many cultures is available.

**Sensory Table:** Water and other materials are introduced frequently as sensory play is an activity that many children enjoy. There are numerous water toys and objects for measuring and pouring. The materials are rotated frequently. Sponges, mops and brooms are close at hand for spills. The contents of the table represent the full spectrum of sensory experience (for example: water, rocks, sand, leaves).

**Math:** Manipulatives (puzzles, beads, peg sets, small blocks, games, and other materials that promote mathematical thinking) are always available to children during free choice time. Children remove what they wish from shelves and use on the tables.

**Building:** A variety of blocks and accessories are always available. A flat surface will encourage more stable and creative building. Blocks are kept sorted by size and shape, to both allow for ease of play and give children practice in these mathematical processes. Pictures and books of buildings are in the area too.

**Science:** This is a table or shelf with hands on materials that involve all five senses to teach key concepts of science. The display is rotated frequently. Tools such as magnifying glasses, tongs, microscopes and binoculars are available.

**Writing:** Paper and writing instruments are available in many areas of the room to encourage literacy; however, a specific space for writing is also very beneficial. This is a table stocked with paper, pencils, letter stamps and stencils and copies of the children's names. A copy of the alphabet in simple block letters is posted nearby.

