

Why Hands-On?

I tried to teach my child with books,

He gave me only puzzled looks.

I tried to teach my child with words,

They passed him by often unheard.

Despairingly, I turned aside,

“How shall I teach this child?” I cried.

Into my hand he put the key,

“Come,” he said, “play with me.”

- Anonymous



Welcome to the UnityPoint Health - Meriter Children's Center!

Meriter Children's Center (MCC) offers a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum in an educationally and emotionally balanced program. Our child-centered environments offer warmth, friendliness and freedom for children to explore and learn about the world around them. Important qualities outside of academic readiness are instilled through a program based on curiosity, experimentation and hands-on learning.

You may wonder..... "What can my child learn in a play-based curriculum?"

The Answer: EVERYTHING!!!

When your child participates in group activities, s/he is learning:

- 👉 To listen and to understand spoken language
- 👉 That her ideas are important
- 👉 New vocabulary
- 👉 To cooperate and to take turns



When your child plays on climbing equipment, s/he is learning:

- 👉 Self confidence
- 👉 Physical strength, coordination, and balance
- 👉 To cooperate with others
- 👉 To solve problems

When your child engages in dramatic play, s/he is learning:

- 👉 To use his imagination
- 👉 To develop her creativity
- 👉 To practice what he sees others do
- 👉 To cooperate and share
- 👉 Self-help skills

When your child reads books, s/he is learning:

- 👉 That reading is important and enjoyable
- 👉 That letters on a page represent words
- 👉 New vocabulary
- 👉 To express her thoughts, feelings and ideas
- 👉 To listen to spoken language
- 👉 To create his own stories
- 👉 To use more complex language patterns in her own speech
- 👉 To follow the development of thoughts and ideas in the plot of a story
- 👉 To handle books with care

When your child participates in Creative arts, s/he is learning:

- ✎ To express his imagination and creativity
- ✎ Concepts of size, shape, color and location
- ✎ How to create patterns and designs
- ✎ To distinguish patterns from background
- ✎ About different textures
- ✎ To hold a drawing tool and control its pressure
- ✎ Eye-hand coordination
- ✎ An acceptable way to make a mess and to clean up

When your child engages in sensory play, s/he is learning:

- ✎ Concepts of size, shape, color, quantity, volume and temperature
- ✎ Conservation (the amount of a substance remains the same even when the shape changes)
- ✎ To control the small muscles in his or her fingers and hands
- ✎ To use tools
- ✎ Eye-hand coordination
- ✎ To observe changes
- ✎ New vocabulary
- ✎ To verbally express what s/he sees, hears, smells and feels

When your child plays with blocks, s/he is learning:

- ✎ To explore cause and effect
- ✎ To use the physical representations of addition and subtraction
- ✎ To develop eye-hand coordination
- ✎ To create, repeat and extend patterns
- ✎ To develop problem solving techniques
- ✎ To differentiate between sizes and shapes

At the Meriter Children's Center, we pride ourselves on following the *Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards* which states that young children learn best through play and the active exploration of their environment.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Guiding Principles

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Steering Committee has established the following *Guiding Principles* to inform the development and application of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards in Wisconsin. These guiding principles reflect the knowledge base in scientific research, our values, and our commitment to young children and families.

All children are Capable and Competent.

Development and learning begins at birth, for all children and in all settings. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards support practices that promote development and protect young children from the harm that results from inappropriate expectations. In this, they are aligned with ethical principles of the early childhood profession.

Early relationships matter.

Beginning at birth, a child forms relationships with adults who will guide their learning and development. Especially during the earliest years of a child's life from birth to age 3, a child's growth and development is shaped within the context of those relationships. Positive relationships are essential for the development of personal responsibility, capacity for self-regulation, for constructive interactions with others, and for fostering academic functioning and mastery. Warm, sensitive, and responsive interactions help children develop a secure, positive sense of self and encourage them to respect and cooperate with others.

A child's early learning and development is multidimensional.

Developmental domains are highly interrelated. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards reflect the interconnectedness of the domains of children's development: social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and communication, health and physical development, and cognition and general knowledge.

Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards are based on research about the processes and sequences of young children's learning and development, and the conditions under which children develop to their fullest potential.

Children are individuals who develop at various rates.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards recognize that there are individual rates of development and learning across any age range.

Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards acknowledge that children's development and learning opportunities reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of children, families and environments.

Children exhibit a range of skills and competencies within any domain of development.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards support the development of optimal learning experiences that can be adapted for individual developmental patterns.

Children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment.

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards reflect the belief that children should be provided with opportunities to explore and apply new skills through child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities, and through interactions with peers, adults and materials. Teachers and families can best guide learning by providing these opportunities in natural, authentic contexts. Positive relationships help children gain the benefits of instructional experiences and resources.

Parents are children's primary and most important caregivers and educators.

Families, communities and schools all have significant roles to play in terms of what opportunities are available to children, and how well a child is able to take advantage of those learning opportunities. Children who see themselves as highly valued are more likely to feel secure, thrive physically, get along with others, learn well, and feel part of a community.

The WI Model Early Learning Standards follow eight domains which we at MCC use to guide our classroom activities.

Social-Emotional Development:

- Children will recognize and express feelings, interact with others, cope with conflict, and work toward a common goal.

Health, Safety and Nutrition:

- Children will begin to take age-appropriate responsibility for their actions, basic self-care needs, health, nutrition, and safety.

Language and Early Literacy:

- Children will continue to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through active engagement with literacy materials, and positive interactions with adults and peers, in real life settings for real purposes.

Creative Representation, Expression and Appreciation of the Arts:

- Children will express themselves through using their bodies and materials as they explore music/movement, visual arts and dramatic play.

Mathematical Thinking and Exploration:

- Children will construct an understanding of mathematical concepts as they interact with materials, people, events and ideas

Scientific Thinking and Exploration:

- Children will think scientifically and construct meaning from their experiences as they interact with living and non-living things, events and ideas.

Community Exploration:

- Children will develop an awareness of the larger world around them

Physical Development:

- Children will develop an awareness and coordination of their bodies through exploration and movement.

More information and a copy of the *Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards* can be found on the Collaborating Partners website: www.collaboratingpartners.com

There's Nothing in My Bag Today

Today I did math and science,
I toasted bread.
I halved and quartered,
Counted, measured, used my eyes,
My ears and head,
I added and subtracted on the way,
I used a magnet, blocks and memory tray.
I learned about a rainbow and how to weigh.
So please don't say, anything in your bag today?
You see, I'm sharing as I play.
I learned to listen and
Speak clearly when I talk,
To wait my turn and when inside to walk.
To put thoughts into a phrase,
To guide a crayon through a maze.
To find my name and write it down,
To do it with a smile and not a frown.
To put my pasting brush away.
So please don't say, what, nothing in your bag today?
I learned about a snail and a worm,
Remembering how to take a turn.
Helped a friend when he was stuck,
Learned that water runs off a duck.
I look at words from left to right,
Agreed to differ and not to fight.
You see, I'm learning as I play.
So please don't say, did you only play today?
- Anonymous