



THE LEAP SCHOOL™
CURRICULUM GUIDE
2022-2023

© August, 2022 LEAP, Inc. All rights reserved.

These materials may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form without prior written permission from LEAP, Inc.

“LEAP School”, the LEAP block design and “Language Enrichment Arts Program” are trademarks of LEAP, Inc.

2023/2024 CURRICULUM GUIDE: TABLE OF CONTENTS

MISSION STATEMENT	1
YOUR CHILD’S LEAP EXPERIENCE	2
Our Fundamental Concepts	
Community	
Emotional Intelligence	
Social Development	
Behavior Management	
The Importance of Process	
Developmentally Appropriate Activities	
Your Child and the Classroom	9
Curriculum Development	
Environmental Planning	
Structure and Choice	
A Typical Day	
The Arts	
Movement and Physical Development	
Literacy	
The Sciences	
Math	
Spanish Enrichment for the Upper School	
Afternoon Programming	
Specialists	
Summer Camp	
Our Goals and Objectives for Your Child	18
Play	
Toddler (15-35 months)	
Lower Preschool (3.0-3.11 years)	
Upper Preschool (4.0+ years)	
Transitional Kindergarten	
TEACHER PLANNING AND RESOURCES	24
Resources for Staff	
Resources for Classroom	
PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT	26
SUMMARY REMARKS	26

© August 12, 2023 LEAP, Inc. All rights reserved.

These materials may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form without prior written permission from LEAP, Inc.

“LEAP School”, the LEAP block design and “Language Enrichment Arts Program” are trademarks of LEAP, Inc

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to foster positive growth in children, parents and teachers through caring, supportive and mutually respectful relationships within a safe, stimulating, child-centered environment. Children, Parents and Teachers represent the three “Seeds of LEAP”.

Every child is seen as a unique individual with gifts. We strive to nurture and develop the emotional, social, physical, and cognitive skills of every child. The Language Enrichment Arts Program (LEAP) encourages self-awareness, self-expression and promotes self-confidence.

The LEAP faculty is dedicated to establishing supportive relationships with parents. We believe in consistent, open and honest communication. We value parent education, provide parent resources and welcome parent involvement.

As educators, we are committed to the professional and personal growth of our teaching team. The LEAP School strives to lay the foundation for thoughtful, compassionate, respectful, responsible, and creative lifelong learners.



Your Child's LEAP Experience

Learning through the arts is a natural skill building process for children, allowing for the integration of a variety of learning styles and enhancing creative expression across all areas of development. The following sections describe some of the various aspects of the classroom environments and curriculum at LEAP.

Our Fundamental Concepts

Community

The LEAP School community is one where each member is known, respected and valued. Children feel connected to one another through experiences that allow them to share who they are with each other, and create memories together.

Your child's first community at LEAP is the classroom group. Teachers plan activities that foster the development of close emotional and social connections. This builds trust, which allows children to feel safe and confident in their environment and relationships. Each child's sense of community is further expanded through large group story times, lunches, school meetings and other activities, during which children become familiar with the other adults and children in their larger school community. LEAP families also play an important role in our community. Parents are welcome to come into class to share stories and activities. There are also events throughout the year, such as the May Show, which invite families to LEAP. Finally, children begin to feel a place in their larger community through activities such as community service projects. As children become integral members of their community, they develop a respect and responsibility for the other children, teachers, families and the larger world.



Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is a foundational aspect of the LEAP philosophy and practice. Emotional Intelligence is a different way of being smart. It is a type of intelligence that deals with recognizing and managing a range of emotions, your own and other people's. Some of the most important qualities associated with Emotional Intelligence are:

- Empathy
- Compassion
- The ability to delay gratification
- Care and responsibility for friends, family, and local and global community.

Emotional Intelligence is a kind of social and emotional connectedness. It is not innate, but must be taught. Research shows that people who have a high degree of Emotional Intelligence are better adjusted, happier and more successful in all aspects of their personal and professional lives. Fostering these qualities in early childhood is particularly important. They pave the way for the level of confidence, focus, self-motivation, and moral character development every child needs to be successful both academically and socially.

At LEAP we feel a deep commitment to nurturing these skills in the children we teach. It is part of our social curriculum. In addition to fostering these qualities through the negotiation of interactions, teachers look for books and themes that provide children a chance to learn about and practice the skills associated with Emotional Intelligence. By using a model containing the five components of Emotional Intelligence, we can achieve a practical application of these principles through daily interactions and opportunities for conflict resolution. The following section entitled "The LEAP Five Component Model," illustrates our methods through example dialogues involving two imaginary children, Stewart and Janie, in an imaginary (but common) social situation. Several examples of possible dialogue are given, in which teachers help children manage both very excited, exuberant feelings, as well as feelings of anger or frustration.

Scenario:

Stewart arrives at school extremely excited about a play date he will be having that afternoon. He has brought a special toy from home to share with his playmate and show his friends at school. He is so excited that he enters the classroom laughing and jumping up and down wildly. While jumping he knocks down Janie's block structure. Janie is frustrated and later she grabs Stewart's toy. Stewart is angry and he tries to hit Janie. Janie yells loudly at Stewart. Stewart begins to cry. A teacher immediately steps in to assist the children in negotiating this situation, helping both Stewart and Janie to understand and express their feelings appropriately, see another's perspective, and feel good about themselves in the interaction. Notice the emphasis on validating the way each child feels, while helping them understand the boundaries of appropriate behavior.

The LEAP Five Component Model

(Adapted from the work of Daniel Goleman as outlined in *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More than IQ*, 1997 Bantam Books, New York, N.Y.)

1. **Self-Awareness:** This is the ability to be aware of your feelings in the moment. We foster this skill at LEAP by consistently labeling the content of interactions and encouraging a more expansive dialogue using language like “Stewart, your smiling face and your jumping body tell me that you are very happy and excited about the play date you have today”. Or “It looks like it made you angry when Janie took that toy away from you, do you think you could let her know how you are feeling, using your words instead of your body?” Labeling emotions helps children to connect a feeling to their behavior, helping them to understand what is happening to them, to be more self aware, and to feel a sense of greater self-control. Expanding the dialogue helps children move into working on other emotional skills as outlined in the model.

2. **Managing Emotions:** This is the ability to handle a feeling so that it can be expressed appropriately. Teachers can help children gain this skill by letting them know the boundaries of expressing their feelings in a safe and appropriate way, taking into consideration their own well being and the well being of others, such as “Stewart, it looks like your jumping body just crashed into Janie’s structure. When your body is jumping, please look and see what is around you so you don’t get hurt or hurt a friend by accident...Can you find a way to show us how happy and excited you are about your play date that will be safe and comfortable for you and your friends? Or “It is okay for you to be angry at Janie for taking your toy, but it is not okay to hit her. Do you think you could use your words to let Janie know that you are mad?”



3. Self-Motivation: This is the ability for emotional self-control, the ability to delay gratification. Being able to curb impulses and delay gratification paves the way for being able to pay attention, achieve mastery, and tap into creativity. An example of facilitating this skill in the classroom is offered by continuing the previous dialogue with Stewart and Janie. *“I can see that it is hard for you to wait Stewart, but in fifteen minutes we will be going outside...I am going to ask you to slow down your body and use a quieter voice. When we get outside you will have more room to jump and run, and you can use a great big “outside voice” to let everyone know how excited you are feeling”!* Or *“Janie, I know you were frustrated when Stewart knocked over your structure... It is okay to feel frustrated and you can tell Stewart how you feel, but it is not all right to take his toy. If you would like a turn to use it, you can use your words and ask Stewart for a turn... Let’s try building your structure again while you wait.”*

4. Empathy: This is the ability to recognize and be sensitive to the feelings of other people, realizing that people can feel differently about the same thing. For example, *“Stewart, I would like you to slow your body down and have a look at your friends faces and bodies. What do you see?... Yes, the other children do look worried and scared. Do you know why?... Maybe they are feeling anxious about the screaming and jumping you are still doing... Maybe it does not bother you when people jump and scream inside the classroom, but it seems as though it might be bothering your friends”.* Or *“I am glad you are using your words Janie, but let’s look at your friends face. I see tears in his eyes, what do you think he might be feeling?... I wonder if he feels sad because you are using an angry, yelling voice. Let’s ask him and see if we can help both of you feel better.”*

5. Managing Relationships: This is the skill of understanding and handling relationships with other people. It is the primary skill of social competence and is what is meant by “strong interpersonal skills”. Let’s end our imaginary interactions with the application of this skill. *“Great job Stewart. I can see that your friends felt really good when you saw how they were feeling and decided to use a slower body and an ‘inside voice’... Thank you for working so hard to help your friends feel safe, I know it’s not easy to calm yourself down when you are so excited”.* Or *“I am so happy that you and Janie have worked out your problem and are feeling better. I am proud of you for seeing how Janie was feeling, and using a quieter voice to tell her that she made you mad when she took the toy... And Janie, thank you for listening to how Stewart was feeling and doing such a good job waiting for a turn. You have both learned something about being a friend today!”*

At LEAP we believe that the early childhood years offer a crucial window to begin the development of the skills associated with Emotional Intelligence as outlined above. However, it is important to remember that, as learning is lifelong, so is the acquisition of these characteristics. Skills such as empathy, compassion and the ability to delay gratification are not solidified at five years of age, but deepen over a lifetime. Our hope is that our teaching model here at LEAP provides the foundation upon which each child can enrich these skills, and build confidence and moral character over the course of their lives.

Social Development

LEAP believes strongly in providing children with guidance and experiences that will be the building blocks for them to become lifelong learners. As we help them build these skills, children will become aware that their actions affect others and begin to take responsibility for those actions. Through interacting, playing, and exchanging ideas with their friends and teachers, children practice being a part of a larger group. They are encouraged to express their emotions and are assisted in finding appropriate avenues for expressing their feelings. Children become confident in their environment when they are able to develop the skills that allow them to solve problems independently. They are encouraged to be active participants in the process of problem solving and conflict resolution - identifying a problem, brainstorming solutions, carrying out the solutions, and reflecting upon the outcome. The children will be offered many opportunities to develop and practice these skills throughout their time at LEAP. Each experience your child has fosters these skills. Cooperative large and small group games, cooperative art activities, free play experiences, classroom jobs, school meetings, and brainstorming ideas are some of the meaningful ways that children enhance their social development during their school experience at LEAP.

Behavior Management

What is behavior? Behavior is a form of communication. It is a reaction to something internal or external. Children tell us about what is affecting them by how they behave. Our job, as teachers and parents, is to create an environment in which there is a common language, so that we can interpret the needs and wants of our children and support appropriate behavior.

What is behavior management? Often this idea is associated with inappropriate behaviors and negative consequences. At LEAP, behavior management is seen as a strategy to help each child negotiate his/her environment and social interactions in successful ways. We believe that creating carefully planned classroom environments, providing valuable teacher interactions and open parent communication are integral parts of our behavior management style.

We believe in creating an environment where children can be successful and thrive in their surroundings. Teachers are constantly fine-tuning plans and areas in the classroom to the needs of each child. Children rely on rules and routines in order to figure out their role in this world. Creating an environment which is predictable, consistent, and safe allows children to feel comfortable, confident, and in control of their surroundings and their actions. Teachers set up a thoughtful balance of limits/boundaries and free choice to help children understand expectations, as well as develop self-confidence, independence, and learn how to be problem solvers. Within this environment, children are learning how to regulate themselves and build skills so they can grow and flourish.

We facilitate their learning of how and what is safe or appropriate by giving gentle reminders and positive social cues. Strategies in the classroom range from redirection, to open negotiations and problem solving in order to find solutions. When a challenge is persistent or a child is seen struggling in his/her environment, teachers' team together to assess and brainstorm. Combining years of experience and strategies, they work as a resource to each other to support the child in their classroom.

Most importantly these behaviors and strategies are communicated to parents through daily conversations, email notes, and scheduled conferences. The bridge between home and school is vital to the understanding and growth of each child. The sharing of information, joining teachers and parents as a team, helps connect the approaches, language, limits, and styles of home and school. This creates an environment of consistency, trust, and mutual support, which allows each child to engage in his/her own unique process of growth and development at LEAP.

The Importance of the Process

At LEAP, we believe that children learn through their own processes and life experiences. The process is a series of steps that one goes through to attain a goal. These steps include experience, involvement, manipulation, decision-making, re-evaluation, experimentation, seeking help, and finding closure to the situation. It is these steps that are valued, rather than the final product. Valuing the process rather than the product is reflected in social interactions, classroom environments, structured activities, play experiences, and the daily schedule. Teachers facilitate and encourage this growth through creating environments, activities, and experiences that support individual exploration and learning. Your child will be encouraged to take the lead, and follow his/her own inspiration down any path of interest. The teacher's role in the process is to reflect upon your child as an individual, and to challenge and motivate him/her to actively explore the world. This process is evident in many areas, including open-ended art activities, the emphasis placed on conflict resolution skills, and an open classroom which allow your child to make his or her own choices. This openness and focus on process allows your child to learn about the world first hand, gain mastery of concepts through experience, and build the foundations for future learning.



Developmentally Appropriate Activities

“Age appropriate” is a term frequently heard when describing preschool programs. Below are some of the attributes that make an activity or environment developmentally appropriate for children.

- Through the fostering of strong relationships, teachers are aware of the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive strengths, needs, and challenges of each child, and can provide opportunities for each child to use his/her strengths and challenges to help him/her grow.
- Open-ended activities are selected that allow children to interact with the materials on a variety of levels and allow children to challenge themselves.
- Activities encourage children to interact with one another and with their environment in positive ways.
- Children have opportunities to participate in similar activities and/or with similar materials on many occasions because children need multiple experiences to master skills and move on to the next level of development.
- Teachers honor the developmental level of each child, which allows them to focus on and value the learning that is happening in the moment.
- Knowing that development happens on a continuum, and that the timing of developmental milestones is different for each child, teachers recognize success and growth as an individual process for each child.



Your Child and the Classroom

Curriculum Development

Curriculum development is an integral part of the planning process for LEAP teachers. Teachers choose a literature-based curriculum for their classroom, and use concepts and themes from the book to develop classroom environments, activity areas and learning activities. Books and their themes are chosen based on the needs and interests of children in their group as well as the age and developmental level of the group. An overview of your teacher's selected books and themes are generally presented at curriculum night. LEAP teachers place an enormous value on knowing the children in their group, their strengths, interests, needs and challenges. Based on the needs and interests of the children in the group, changes may be made to the theme or book list as the year progresses. Information about daily and weekly activities is posted on the communication board outside of your child's classroom and shared with you in weekly emails.

Carefully chosen and planned activities are used to incorporate learning in many different areas, including cognitive skills, language skills, social/emotional skills, moral development, creative thinking skills, creative expression, fine and gross motor skills, and much more! In each classroom, children have an opportunity to explore a book in-depth for a period of time. They will be encouraged to explore independently or with friends in each of the interest areas. They will find activities throughout the classroom focusing on several different themes or concepts that are all connected to the book. They also will be encouraged to explore each of the interest areas independently, or with friends. Each style offers children many rich learning opportunities as they interact with materials and with their friends each day.

Literature-Based Environmental Planning

Environmental planning is the process by which teachers integrate the curriculum themes throughout each of the learning areas in the classroom. Teachers at LEAP thoughtfully prepare areas to provide children with experiences using materials and concepts related to the feature book. The classroom environment is comprised of different open ended activity areas where children are encouraged to play, learn, and explore at their own pace. To maintain a challenging and intriguing environment, teachers evaluate the materials in each learning area, assessing changes to be made. A Science/Discovery Area, Writing Area, Block Area, Manipulative Area, Drama Area, Easels, Cozy Corner, and Art Area are typically included in the classroom.

Planning environmentally provides children the opportunity to explore themes and literature in a variety of meaningful ways. For example, while exploring the book, The Seashore Book by Charlotte Zolotow, children explore the seashore through many mediums. At the Writing Center, they may use ocean stamps, stickers, stencils, or markers to create ocean pictures or books. At the Sensory Table, they could experiment with items to determine which items float and sink. In the Cozy Corner, children might explore a variety of fiction and non-fiction ocean books. At the Easel, a child may use sea sponges and paint to create prints or designs. Sorting and examining shells, coral, starfish, and sand dollars at the Science/Discovery Area stimulates young minds. The Drama Area can be turned into an underwater world where creative minds pretend and develop ocean adventures together.

Through environmental planning, books are brought alive for children through their hands on experiences in the learning areas.

Structure and Choice

“There are two aspects to providing occasions for wonderful ideas. One is to be willing to accept children’s ideas. The other is providing a setting that suggests wonderful ideas to children – different ideas to different children – as they are caught up in intellectual problems that are real to them.” (Eleanor Duckworth. The Having of Wonderful Ideas. 1996, Teacher’s College Press, NY, NY.)

At LEAP, we view children as creators – as scientists, artists, mathematicians – and we know that the knowledge children construct for themselves as they play is the most meaningful. Teachers carefully prepare stimulating environments that give children opportunities to make independent choices, develop social skills and engage in interesting curriculum. The environment allows children to learn at their own pace and according to diverse interests. One three-year-old may develop mathematical thinking by grouping her dinosaurs by type; another may gain the same skills by building with blocks.

Teachers create a predictable daily routine that balances time for children to be independent learners with a more structured time for the group to come together. For much of the day at LEAP, children choose their activities and playmates. Some parts of the day such as circle time are more structured, helping children learn skills they need. For example, during circle time or story time, children engage in singing, games, stories and group discussions. They enjoy being part of a community and learning how to work within it, how to express themselves, how to listen, and how to take turns.

The typical components of the day are choice time, circle time, activity time (including snack and project), outside time, lunch and story time. During the course of a typical day, this balance of structure and choice allows your child to experience learning through a combination of independent exploration and structured activities.

A Typical Day

The LEAP School maintains a balance between teacher-directed and child-directed activities throughout the day. The daily schedule is consistent and predictable for all classrooms. When children feel a sense of control over their environment, their confidence strengthens. Every classroom is designed slightly different to accommodate various developmental levels and individual group needs. The following is a broad example of a typical day at LEAP:

Morning Drop-Off

- Good-bye to Parent or other Caregiver
- Choice Time
- Table Top Activities

Circle Time

- Group time that may consist of calendar, weather, songs, movement activities, puppetry, brainstorming sessions, games, and theme/book related activities.

Activity Time

- Snack (*provided from home*)
- Choice Time
- Project Time that may include science, movement, music, visual arts, drama, cooking, or other activities.
- Specialist Time that may include science, music/movement, drama, animals, gymnastics, or other special events. A calendar is passed out with an overview of these dates.

Gross Motor Time

- Outdoors, weather permitting. This includes sand play, climbing equipment, dramatic play spaces, riding toys, balls, group games, etc.
- Indoors during inclement weather. This includes climbing equipment, balls, riding toys, building materials, balance beams, group games, etc.

Lunch Time (*provided from home*)

Story Time

- Group time that may consist of stories, songs, games, flannel board stories, etc.

End of Morning Transition

- Children will go home or stay at LEAP for Nap or the Afternoon Arts Program. See "Afternoon Programming" for further details about this time of day.



The Arts

LEAP integrates the arts into its environment, activities, and specialist times. Children are exposed to various forms of creative arts and encouraged to explore those that interest them. This may include music, visual arts, storytelling, dramatic play, or puppetry. Children are also encouraged to use the arts to express their thoughts, feelings, and imagination. We provide children with opportunities to participate in creative art activities during structured and free choice times on a daily basis. Some types of experiences that your child may encounter are:

- **Music**

- Group Sing Alongs
- Instruments
- Musical Recordings
- Listening Centers

- **Visual Arts**

- "Help Yourself" art shelves with a range of materials for free art (glue, scissors, markers, crayons, collage materials, glitter, beads, variety of paper, playdough, etc.)
- Easels for painting and other art experiences
- Table Top Activities
- Teacher-prepared activities

- **Storytelling**

- Flannel Board Stories
- Big Books
- Generating Group Stories
- Creating Books
- Participating in group storytelling
- Group Story Times

- **Dramatic Play**

- Classroom drama areas
- Acting out stories/songs
- Dress-up Clothes and Props
- Puppets
- Dolls/ Animals
- Block Play

- **Dance and Movement**

- Group Dancing
- Freeze Dancing
- Ribbon Dancing



Movement and Physical Development

We integrate movement into our daily schedule. This provides children with an opportunity to develop their gross motor skills as well as learn about the world in a more active manner. Weather permitting; the children have an opportunity to play outdoors each day. They can use the climbing structure, run, climb, dig in the sandbox, play with push toys, experiment with balls, and participate in structured games. On extremely cold or rainy days, we provide children with an indoor play space, which is equipped with a variety of gross motor materials. Children may encounter ball pits, balance beams, large building materials, rocking boats, parachute play, or ribbon dancing. Each of our schools arranges this based on the space and the needs of the children. These spaces are also available to groups throughout the day for additional gross motor activities, or other large group experiences.

Literacy

Teachers incorporate literacy into the classroom in a variety of ways. It will easily become part of your child's play experience and daily routine. We use a literature-based curriculum in most of our classrooms. This style of planning incorporates the themes in a book or collection of books with the environment, activities, and projects that occur in the classroom. Our main goals are to help children discover the connection between books and the world around them and to acquire a love for books and reading. These two goals will motivate children to read and write in the future because they will find joy and value in both.

Books are read daily to children in group and individual settings. Children are also encouraged to look at books on their own in the classroom library. As children develop skills, they will begin to recognize the front and back of a book, how to handle a book, the connections between text and illustrations, understand the term "author" and "illustrator", and make simple predictions about the outcome of a story. Your child will be exposed to a variety of authors and illustrators and over time, may develop favorites and become familiar with different styles.

Your child will be exposed to a print rich environment, which encourages him/her to recognize that written symbols (print) represent a spoken word and motivates him/her to begin to figure out how that system works. Shelves and bins are labeled with a picture and a word to help children identify where materials belong. Your child's name will appear in many places such as the birthday board, welcome sign, and cubby tag. You will also find posters, signs, and other labels that support our print rich environment. Teachers find many creative ways to incorporate print into games, puzzles, the calendar, dramatic play props, and other familiar classroom materials.

Your child's writing development will be supported in many ways. Our younger children are encouraged to make marks on paper and practice future writing motions as they scribble. They are also provided many opportunities to develop the appropriate muscles in their arms, hands, and fingers, which will support the control they will need as they begin to write in the future. As children get older, they will fine-tune their control and therefore begin to create representational drawings. Children are provided opportunities during projects, circle, and in various classroom environments to develop this skill while having fun. Children will also begin to recognize that print represents words and has meaning. This motivates them to begin writing and experimenting with a variety of writing tools. Children will experiment with many stages of writing from scribble writing to mock writing to actual letters to inventive spelling. We encourage this interest by providing writing materials that allow for many creative experiences such as making save signs for blocks structures, get well cards for a sick friend, menus for a pretend restaurant, or a book about the seed that grew into a plant.

The Sciences

Science incorporates active learning and self-discovery. Your child will have the opportunity to explore a variety of scientific concepts throughout the day at LEAP. Teachers offer group activities and rotating science centers in the classroom. Children are encouraged to explore their world through open-ended questions that lead to scientific discoveries. These experiences encourage independent and creative thinking, problem solving skills, investigation, process, experimentation, and an awareness of the larger world. Children use all of their senses as they investigate scientific concepts. A sample of the concepts your child may explore includes nature, cooking, bubbles, colors, weights and measures, planting, magnets, environments, and seasons.

Math

Children are surrounded by mathematical opportunities throughout their day at LEAP. Teachers incorporate concepts into their activities, environment, and daily routines. Children are able to explore and manipulate these ideas during structured times, such as circle and story time. The calendar, counters, estimation games, graphs, songs, movement games, and stories all provide opportunities to introduce a variety of concepts. Children also gain experience during choice times. The block area develops skills in shape identification and size discrimination as your child builds a tower, a "Construction Site" in the drama area provides your child an opportunity to measure pieces of wood, and memory games help develop matching skills.

We support each child's individual learning style by encouraging manipulation, offering a variety of opportunities to experience the same concept, and asking questions that extend his/her exploration and understanding of an idea. These skills will begin being introduced during your child's Toddler year and will continue to expand and grow as your child gets older. Concepts and skills that will be introduced include: identification, shapes, matching, size discrimination, classification, seriating, sequencing, and patterning.

Spanish Enrichment for the Upper School

Each month the Upper School teachers will introduce new Spanish vocabulary to the group based on themes that are relevant to preschoolers. Some of the themes may include greetings, numbers, animals, and colors. This vocabulary is presented playfully through games and songs. Our goal is to expose the children to cultural diversity by demonstrating that in other cultures people use different words to describe the same things. The children are usually fascinated by this concept and are enthusiastic about the chance to use their new words.

Afternoon Programming

The philosophy behind our afternoon program is to provide a focus that is different from the morning classroom. It is a less structured, more recreational time of the day at LEAP. Children who do not nap are given an opportunity to rest and relax followed by a variety of activities including visual arts, music, drama, science, and sports, in an environment that supports free choice. The curriculum is designed to give children a variety of fun and enriching experiences, without necessarily focusing on themes or feature books. Teachers are aware and attentive to the needs of each child, sensitive to the fact that some children need to be very active in the afternoon and others may need ample opportunity for rest and relaxation.

When morning groups are over, children who do not attend afternoon groups go home for the day. For children who stay, the afternoon brings some changes and transitions, whether it is to a new classroom, a different group of children, or a new teacher. A change in environment stimulates new opportunities for play, with new toys, new friends and new ideas. Young children are growing and changing very rapidly. With these developmental changes come a variety of needs for rest and activity during the course of a day. We have designed the following options to provide the flexibility required to respond to these changing needs:

- **Nap:** Nap is designed for children who typically sleep for two or more hours a day. Low lighting, comfortable mats, and soothing music are the backdrop for your child's experience in this group. Children usually sleep until they wake on their own, and are then assisted as needed with toileting, and given a snack before pick up time.
- **Afternoon Arts Program (¾ day):** These groups run until 3:30. Teachers create a warm, home-like environment in which children can explore a variety of activities, play styles, and social opportunities. The afternoon begins with an opportunity for the children to rest in the classroom with their own blankets or other comforting items. Afternoon Arts include free time to explore the classroom, as well as gross motor time outdoors or in the big hall; an optional daily activity time, as well as a snack (*provided from home*). Activity choices are designed to provide enjoyment in a variety of interests such as cooking, art, science, music, drama, and sports. Generally, an informal group time for stories, songs or the sharing of thoughts and ideas is also part of the afternoon.
- **Afternoon Arts Program (full day):** Full day Afternoon Arts differs only in the length of time. These groups function just as described above, except that they continue until 4:30.

Specialists

Specialist groups provide another opportunity for children to explore exciting new topics during their time at LEAP. Specialists bring their enthusiasm and expertise in a particular area – music, science, drama, storytelling, yoga, etc. – to the classroom to provide a new experience for children and teachers. During specialist times children interact with materials and one another to explore the theme for the week. Some of our specialists come to LEAP on a consistent basis, others on an occasional basis. The specialist that your child sees will be determined by your child’s schedule and by the schedule of the specialist. We also consider the ages of the children when exposing them to specialists. Our goals for the younger children are to help them feel comfortable with saying good-bye to a parent/caregiver, forming relationships with their teachers, and feeling safe and happy at school. We support this goal by keeping teachers consistent before introducing new people, such as specialists. As groups are ready, we begin introducing specialists.

Summer Program

The LEAP schools offer a Summer Program during the months of July and August. This program offers a “camp-like” feel with many exciting activities! The relaxed atmosphere focusing on relationship building and summer time discoveries is a perfect way to introduce your child to the LEAP staff, school friends, and classroom settings. Fun themes are created in which the whole school participates. You will find these themes represented through classroom activities, the outdoor curriculum, special events, spirit days, and other community building activities. Our toddler groups will spend the summer getting to know their new teachers, environment and friends. Their primary focus will be on making these connections while the themes serve as a back drop. The focus of the summer program is recreational. Children have extended periods of choice time both inside and outside, during which they have the opportunity to explore materials in the classroom, enjoy social experiences, and put on a bathing suit for water-play!



Our Goals and Objectives for Your Child

The purpose of the following section is to give parents an idea of what children may be working on in each phase of their development at LEAP. The goals are broad and are appropriate for children between the ages listed. Children develop at their own pace and these goals will not be mastered at the same time for every child. The LEAP teachers facilitate these goals by providing the children with materials and an environment supportive of their growth. More specific goals for each classroom are presented each September at Curriculum Night, which we strongly encourage all parents to attend.

In addition to understanding the goals and objectives listed below for each age group, it is important to remember the importance of play as a learning tool at each age and stage of development in early childhood. What happens during play in our enriching environment is the hidden learning opportunity in your child's day at LEAP, and is as important as the structured activities each teacher plans for their classroom in helping your child reach the goals and objectives of their age group.

The benefits of play are enormous and go beyond the kinds of things we talk about so easily, like developing skills and learning concepts. Play offers children opportunities that come from nowhere else. Through play, children get involved in open-ended exploration. They are not confined by rules, procedures or outcomes. Children at play have self-direction. They have power. Through total absorption during play, they work on problems, they make choices, and they find out what interests them.

(Janet Gonzalez-Mena & Dianne Widmeyer Eyer. *Infants, Toddlers and Caregivers*. 1997, Mayfield Publishing, Mountview, CA.)

Play

- Play is the way children make sense of their world and is the natural way they learn.
- Play is a child's work
- Play is:
 - self-initiated
 - spontaneous
 - a way of finding out about people
 - a way of learning to live with people
 - a means of thinking
 - a means of developing and practicing skills
 - an opportunity for children to use their curiosity to explore, experiment, and test ideas
 - an aid to developing concentration
 - a way of nurturing creativity
 - a means of self-expression
- During play, teachers:
 - allow uninterrupted concentration
 - intervene when appropriate
 - extend learning
 - stimulate the child and arouse curiosity
 - support the child, sometimes by becoming involved
 - observe the child
 - encourage involvement in a variety of activities
 - promote children's self-esteem by valuing their efforts
 - encourage children to value their own efforts and the efforts of others

The following will give you an idea of what your child may be working on during each of the preschool years and in the kindergarten year. Please keep in mind that these goals are broad and are appropriate for the age range indicated. Children develop at their own pace and these goals will not be mastered at the same time for every child. We facilitate the goals by providing the children with materials and an environment supportive of their growth.

LEAP Toddler Goals and Objectives: ***15 – 35 months***

I. Social/Emotional Development

- feels secure in relationships with others
- refers to self by name
- displays pride in accomplishments
- recognizes self in mirror
- shows sign of independence
- independently chooses toys and begins to play
- begins to show interest followed by interaction with other children. These sequences will slowly lengthen until sharing and turn taking are evident
- begins to learn ways to say good-bye to parents

II. Motor/Perceptual Development

- develops large motor skills such as jumping, climbing up and down, throwing and hopping
- is exposed to a variety of art media to develop fine motor skills; including paints, crayons, scissors and paper.
- is exposed to a variety of sensory materials to develop fine motor skills; including sand, water, shaving cream, and finger paints
- manipulates objects and toys to develop fine motor skills
- uses large motor and fine motor abilities to develop self-help skills

III. Cognitive Development

- begins to develop such cognitive skills as object identification, matching objects, discriminating sizes
- begins to apply learned knowledge to new situations
- follows simple directions
- begins to develop problem solving strategies
- is exposed to stories, language and songs
- develops beginning literacy skills:
 - acquires a love for books
 - makes an association between stories and daily life

- connects text and illustrations
- looks at books independently and uses illustrations to tell own story
 - is exposed and encouraged to participate in short group activities

IV. Communication/Language

- uses non-verbal cues to express self
- asks and answers questions
- begins to use language to express self which grows in number and variety of words
 - uses a large number and variety of words
 - begins to verbally express needs and feelings
 - actively participates in dramatizing familiar activities

V. Self Help Skills

- practices self-dressing
- washes and dries own hands after toileting and before meals
- begins to use gestures or words to indicate diapering or toileting needs.

LEAP Lower Preschool Goals And Objectives : (3.0 – 3.11)

I. Social/Emotional Development

- To experience a sense of self-esteem:
 - exhibit confidence in own abilities
 - demonstrate increasing independence
- To exhibit a positive attitude:
 - comfortable interacting and seeking help from adults
 - demonstrate the ability to separate from parents or caregiver
- To demonstrate cooperation and prosocial behavior:
 - verbally express needs and feelings
 - form meaningful relationships with peers
 - accept the play ideas of others
 - show an interest in sharing toys and materials
 - respond positively when conflict resolution skills are modeled by a teacher

II. Cognitive Development

- To acquire learning and problem solving skills:
 - demonstrate interest in exploring
 - ask and respond to questions
 - show curiosity and a desire to learn
 - use creativity and imagination
- To expand logical thinking skills:
 - identify names of objects and events
 - participate in sorting, comparing, and describing activities
 - classify objects by similarities and differences
 - begin to recognize a sequence of events (beginning, middle, end)
- To demonstrate imaginative play skills:
 - assume a pretend role
 - pretend with props and objects
 - interact with other children in imaginative play

III. Language and Literacy Development

- To expand verbal communication skills:
 - utilize effective articulation
 - use words in context
 - demonstrate a broad vocabulary
 - recall words in song or fingerplay
 - follow simple directions
 - talk with other children during daily activities
- To develop beginning reading skills:
 - enjoy listening to stories and looking at books
 - able to listen to a story and respond to questions about it
 - demonstrate the ability to use a book (direction, page-turning)
- To acquire beginning writing skills:
 - use writing tools for self-expression
 - begin to recognize own name
 - become aware of print and symbols in the classroom environment

IV. Classroom Characteristics

- To develop play skills:
 - comfortable with independent play
 - able to participate in small group experiences (games, table activities, freeplay)
 - able to participate in large group experiences (circle, specialists, story time)
 - display listening skills
 - participate in group discussion appropriately
 - demonstrate ability to focus on one task

- To become aware of schedules and routines:
 - follow classroom routines
 - transition easily from one activity to another
 - respond positively to adult suggestions
 - willing to try new activities
 - use materials with purpose
- To demonstrate self-help skills:
 - develop an awareness of basic safety and health skills
 - take responsibility for dressing/undressing appropriately
 - take initiative for toileting needs
 - take responsibility for own belongings

V. Physical Development

- To enhance gross motor skills:
 - demonstrate increasing gross motor control and coordination
 - walk up and down steps with alternating feet
 - run with increasing control over direction and speed
 - climb up or down equipment
 - willing to try new gross motor activities
- To enhance and refine fine motor skills:
 - demonstrate increasing fine motor control and coordination
 - use classroom manipulatives to develop fine motor skills
 - use small muscles to attempt self-help skills
 - use art materials, such as playdough, paint brushes, and markers to strengthen fine motor abilities
 - willing to try new fine motor activities

Upper Preschool Goals and Objectives (4.0+)

I. Social/Emotional Development

- To experience a sense of self-esteem:
 - exhibits confidence in own abilities
 - advocates for oneself
 - demonstrates increasing independence
- To exhibit a positive attitude
 - demonstrates interest and participation in classroom activities
 - participates in routine activities easily
 - transitions into the school day with ease
 - comfortable interacting and seeking help from adults
- To demonstrate cooperation and prosocial behavior:
 - verbally expresses needs and feelings
 - forms meaningful relationships with peers
 - shares toys and materials
 - respects and tolerates various play styles
 - attempts to resolve conflicts constructively
 - works cooperatively with others on completing tasks

II. Cognitive Development

- To acquire learning and problem solving skills:
 - demonstrates an interest in exploring classroom materials
 - asks and responds to questions on topic
 - shows curiosity and a desire to learn
 - uses creativity and imagination
 - uses planning skills
 - applies information and experience to a new context
 - incorporates multiple strategies to accomplish goals
 - finds strategies to persist in frustrating tasks

- To expand logical thinking skills:
 - classifies objects by similarities and differences
 - puts objects together that belong together (sorting)
 - arranges objects in a series (smallest to largest)
 - recognizes patterns and is able to repeat them
 - counts in correct sequence from 1-10 and attempts to count from 10-20
 - demonstrates an ability to do one-to-one correspondence
 - demonstrates an awareness of time concepts (yesterday, today, tomorrow)
 - observes and makes discoveries
 - identifies relationships of objects in space (below, inside, above)
 - makes comparisons (more/less, large/small)
 - demonstrates an ability to predict a cause and effect outcome
- To demonstrate imaginative play skills:
 - assumes a pretend role
 - pretends with props and objects
 - interacts with other children in imaginative play
 - sustains imaginative play

III. Language and Literacy Development

- To expand verbal communication skills:
 - utilizes effective articulation
 - uses words in context
 - demonstrates a broad vocabulary
 - recalls words in a song or finger play
 - follows simple directions
 - talks with other children during daily activities
 - participates in group discussions appropriately
 - makes up stories
- To develop beginning reading skills:
 - enjoys listening to stories and looking at books
 - listens to stories and can explain what happened

- recognizes letters in own name and most other letters in the alphabet
- recognizes own name and other sight words
- identifies rhyming words
- To acquire beginning writing skills:
 - makes increasingly representational drawings
 - writes own name
 - imitates recognizable letters and numbers
 - demonstrates an interest in using writing for a purpose (making signs, sending letters)

IV. Classroom Characteristics

- To develop play skills:
 - comfortable with independent play
 - cooperates in small group experiences
 - cooperates in large group experiences
 - displays listening skills
 - participates in group discussions appropriately
 - able to follow 2-3 step directions
 - demonstrates ability to focus on one task until completion
- To become aware of schedules and routines:
 - follows classroom routines
 - transitions easily from one activity to another
 - responds positively to adult suggestions
 - willing to try new activities
 - uses materials with purpose
 - demonstrates ability to be a self-starter
- To demonstrate self-help skills:
 - demonstrates basic safety and health skills
 - can take responsibility for dressing/undressing appropriately
 - takes initiative for toileting needs
 - takes responsibility for own belongings

V. Physical Development

- To enhance gross motor skills:
 - demonstrates increasing gross motor control and coordination
 - demonstrates increased balance and agility
 - throws an object in an intended direction
 - willing to try new gross motor activities
 - Climbs up or down equipment without falling
- To enhance and refine fine motor skills:
 - demonstrates increasing fine motor control and coordination
 - uses classroom materials, such as manipulatives and toys, to develop fine motor skills
 - uses small muscles for self-help skills such as pouring and zipping
 - uses writing and drawing tools with increasing control and appropriate grasp
 - willing to try new fine motor activities

The main distinction of this class is a consideration of the slightly older average age, and the realization that many of these children will have been in preschool for an additional year.



Transitional Kindergarten Goals and Objectives

This grouping is offered based on our in-house enrollment.

The Transitional Kindergarten is intended to offer an enrollment option for children whose birthday falls close to the public school entrance date. Our curriculum goals for this class follow many of the same goals as our Upper Pre-School groups.

Teacher Planning and Resources

All LEAP Schools are staffed by educated and invested teachers with a common philosophy and goals. Our family-like and supportive atmosphere fosters the development and growth of our teachers by offering resources for the classroom, age appropriate planning, and their own professional growth. We have worked hard to create an inspiring and well-rounded environment to encourage personal expression of gifts and talents that enrich our community.

Our unique teaching schedule allows for flexibility and creates a wonderful balance of planning and teaching. Weekly, teachers meet for supervision with their Program Director to discuss class happenings, prepare for conferences, and receive support personally and professionally. Teachers also meet every other week with their Curriculum Director in small groups to discuss classroom event planning, classroom curriculum, and brainstorm with other teachers. A portion of these meetings are dedicated to creating, setting up and maintaining classroom environments and materials. Included in teachers' weekly schedule is a staff meeting which provides an opportunity to brainstorm school-related topics, prepare for upcoming events, and participate in professional growth experiences as a team.

LEAP is a unique and distinctive community filled with a variety of resources for staff, children, and parents.

Resources for Staff

- Extensive and comprehensive training (including training guide and monthly meetings for first year teachers)
- Weekly meetings with directors and staff (brainstorming, modeling, supporting, team teaching environment)
- On site Program Director and Curriculum Directors (in classrooms daily for support, observations, and modeling)
- Language specialist available to advise and support teachers in these areas of development
- Enhanced technologies connect to all Four LEAP Schools to provide communication between faculty and families
- In-service training (including first aid certification and teacher generated topics)
- Bi-yearly reviews (including goal setting and placement)
- Tuition reimbursement for further education
- Personal support and family like atmosphere
- Phone paging system for support in classrooms
- Weekly paid planning time

Resources for Classrooms

- Planning/activity resource books
- In-school children's library
- Curriculum kits (including activity ideas, books, materials, and environmental supplements based on themes)
- Drama trunks (including costumes, props, and backdrops/scenery)
- Math kits
- Science kits
- Art supplies
- Classroom and educational budgets
- Grocery shopping for cooking projects

Parent Involvement and Support

The LEAP School faculty strives to establish supportive, mutually respectful and caring relationships with parents. When teachers and parents work together to support one another, the children benefit in many ways.

The following vehicles of communication are set up to facilitate the ongoing dialogue with parents: daily conversations, e-mail, weekly communication about your child and the classroom curriculum, bi-monthly newsletters, parent conferences, progress notes and annual home visits. Our open door policy invites parents to come into the school on a regular basis and participate in classroom activities.

The school strives to create a supportive, engaging community through ongoing events throughout the year. These include Parent coffees/events, May Shows, Meet the Teacher Nights, Curriculum Nights, and ongoing classroom gatherings. These events strengthen connections between parents and teachers, build parent/parent relationships and nurture our community.

The faculty strives to provide opportunities for ongoing parent education and resources. We have an extensive referral network of outside consultants, therapists and evaluators. Developmental screenings are available to determine any needs that may warrant intervention and services. The LEAP School Parent Handbook is provided to parents at the beginning of each school year to outline the policies and procedures of the school. The Curriculum Guide outlines the Curriculum Goals and Objectives of each developmental age grouping and curriculum content. The parent resource library is stocked with books, articles and tapes/CDs on many developmental topics. These resources and on-going parent seminars support the parent and teacher education process.

Summary Remarks

The LEAP School Curriculum Guide is designed to help familiarize parents with the orientation and format of the program. This includes daily programming, yearly plans, and goals and objectives for the entire school. The LEAP staff invites parents to participate in offering teachers creative ideas and feedback for the curriculum. Please address any questions to your child's morning or afternoon teacher, or to the Program Director. We hope this packet and the Curriculum Night will provide parents with a greater understanding of their child's daily experience and LEAP's commitment to excellence in education!