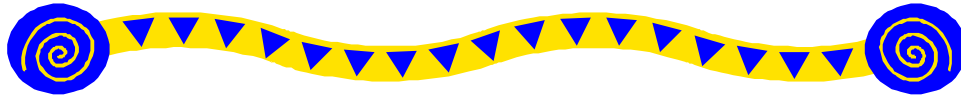
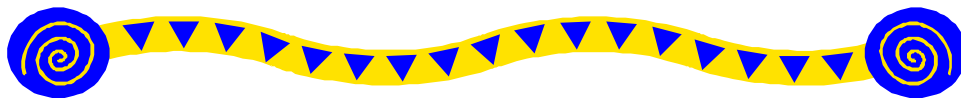


ProKids Child Development Center



Preschool Program
Family Handbook



Bright Horizons Family Solutions

What You Will Find In The Preschool Program Family Handbook

Welcome letter from homebase teachers

The World at Their Fingertips welcome poem

Our Little Corner of the World, homebase information

What to bring on the first day

Preschool Program daily schedule

Information about Mixed-Age Grouping

The World at Their Fingertips

Education for Bright Horizons

About tracking child development

Areas for tracking child development

Preschool Program developmental milestones

Welcome

Dear Family,

First, we'd like to warmly welcome you! Your child has been enrolled in the *Preschool Program*. So many great things will happen in our unit, and we're excited that you'll be a part of the experience!

Please become familiar with the information provided in this packet, it has important information that will help you find your way around the homebase. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please know that we are here for you.

Thank you so much for this great opportunity and we look forward to becoming a strong team with you, for your child!

Your Teachers,

The
World
at Their
Fingertips

Welcome to a place of
microscopes and mess,
kaleidoscopes and computers,
blocks and books;

a warm, soft place of beauty
that has the tone and
texture of childhood;

A place filled with laps,
smiles and hugs,
and an abundance of good
conversation.



The Preschool Program

Our Little Corner of the World

This is such an exciting time for children! They have many opportunities to learn new things and participate in unique and fascinating experiences. Our roll, as teachers, together with you as parents, is to provide children with a strong foundation on which we'll continue to build so they become active and excited learners!

We look so forward to the time we spend in our homebase and would like you to feel the same. The information provided in this packet will help you become familiar with Our Little Corner of the World.

Question

What measures have you taken to ensure a smooth transition when entering and departing the center?

Answer

Transitioning to and from the center is not always easy. Establishing and sticking to a routine helps your children feel secure, they begin to learn what to expect next. We suggest the following

Checking In: Please be sure to, first, check your child in every morning.

Personal Items: Please allow your child to participate in putting any personal items away. Jackets, their soft sleep toy and blanket should go in their cubby. Spare clothes should be removed from the bag and placed in the bin labeled with their name in the bathroom closet. This helps children know they have a place of their own and that you support them in that.

Where To Go: When you arrive for the day, please come to your homebase. We do not combine classrooms in the morning or evening.

Important Information: We are here for you. We would love for you to feel welcome to communicate any information that may help us better serve your child.

Saying Goodbye: Saying goodbye isn't easy, but there are a few things you can do to help ease the transition. It is so important to develop a routine that works for you and your child. Always say good-bye and communicate with them when you'll be back. Reinforce that you support and feel comfortable with them being here.

Question

How will I get important information about my child's day?

Answer

We strive every day to create a strong Parent Partnership with you and welcome and invite verbal communication at any time. We also feel, however, that written communication is a very important and essential part of our communication exchange. We use the following methods...

Mailboxes: Please check your child's mailbox every night. Mailboxes are used for any information that needs to be taken home such as art work, newsletters and important information.

Parent Conferences: As a center, we have scheduled times when we conduct conferences. In the Preschool Unit, we want you to know that you can schedule a conference with your primary care teacher as often as you choose. We're happy to set goals and discuss your child's development at any time.

Question

Who will care for my child?

Answer

*The teachers in the Preschool Program are a team of caring professionals. Together they care for, plan, teach, play with, interact with, observe, assess, and meet the needs of every child in a loving and nurturing atmosphere. Based on availability and schedules, your child will have a **primary caregiver**.*

A **primary caregiver** is responsible for...

Daily communication with you; either written or verbal

Documentation of your child's growth and development

Important paperwork such as accident reports, medicine forms, etc.

Creating and updating your child's portfolio

Developing individual child goals and objectives with you

Child assessments

Parent conferences

Please feel free to communicate concerns with any teacher in the room, and please know they will be addressed appropriately.

Question

How do I know what learning experiences are being provided for my child?

Answer

*As a Bright Horizons center, we develop education plans that are individualized to meet the current needs of the children in the homebase through **The World at Their Fingertips, Education for Bright Horizons**. The learning that is happening in our room is made visible through...*

Parent Board: Our parent board has a lot of great information and should be visited regularly. The parent board is located near the cubbies and will contain the following forms...

What in the World is Planned for Today- This is a form we post informing you of what is planned for the day and what actually happened at the end of the day.

Preschool Learning Environment- This is a form we post informing you of what materials have been added to our learning centers for that given week.

Activities and Projects- This is a form we post that highlights the activities and projects planned for the week. It is intended to be a brief overview at a glance, for more details, refer to the posted "What in the World is Planned for Today" form.

Week in Review- This is a form we post that highlights what we actually learned from our weekly activities and is broken down into the different areas of growth your child experiences.

Other Important Information- Teacher's schedules are posted along with a weekly menu, and important notices and reminders

Child Development Portfolios: Each child will have their own portfolio.

Their portfolio will contain writing samples, art work, newsletters, milestones, projects, and pictures of your child in action. Your child's primary care teacher will be responsible for helping your child build their portfolio. Please do not remove their portfolios from the center.

Documentation Board: Please visit our documentation board regularly. It highlights the learning that is taking place in our room in a very visual way. It contains pictures, children's work, summaries written by the teachers, and at times, even recipes and items you can take with you.

Our Homebase: We are constantly hanging up children's artwork. The artwork hung will always be rotated and current to the activities that are taking place in the homebase. Please visit the homebase regularly to see all the creative work that is taking place in our room. Artwork is always displayed at the child's eye level.

Question

How do you celebrate birthdays and other special events and occasions?

Answer

We value and welcome your customs and culture. Please let us know what we can do to help your child share their special days and culture with their friends. Please feel welcome to communicate with us if you would choose not to have your child participate in birthday or other celebrations and we will be happy to make accommodations.

Question

Will my child be leaving the center for any reason?

Answer

Outside time is an important part of our day. Children can develop through their senses when exposed to what outside time has to offer. We practice the following...

Field Trips: Field trips are an educational way to extend on what we are learning. You will be notified in advance of any upcoming field trips. We must have a signed permission slip for each field trip. Family members are welcome and encouraged to join us at any time.

Playground: We have two opportunities to use our playground to promote physical development

Question

Is it OK for my child to bring toys to school?

Answer

A soft sleep toy may be brought from home to be taken out at nap time. Please help your child deliver their soft toy to their cubby in the morning. Please do not bring other toys from home, they may cause fighting or may break or get lost.

Question

When does my child have an opportunity to rest?

Answer

We feel rest time is a fundamental part of a child's growth. We are aware, however, that not all children require a nap. Children who do not nap are openly welcome to read a book or play independently from others with a quiet item on their cot. No child will ever be forced to nap at any time. We do, however, strongly enforce the children who do not nap, to play quietly enough as not to disrupt those who do nap.

Question

Will my child get messy?

Answer

Many activities that yield a messy outcome are very exciting, educational, and fundamental to your child's development. We do our best to keep their clothing from becoming soiled, but cannot prevent it 100% of the time. If you have somewhere to go and need them looking their best, please let us know in the morning, and we'll be happy to help them into a clean change of clothes for your expected pick-up time.

Question

How will you help my child become involved and aware of classroom routines and responsibilities?

Answer

Helping children develop self-help skills and responsibility for their surroundings is a very important aspect of our daily routine. We help foster these skills through...

Job Chart: Each week jobs are assigned. Children learn how to participate in classroom routines by leading the line outside or helping set the table.

Self-Help: We encourage these skills by providing an age appropriate environment where children can feel safe and confident. We always encourage children to try a new task independently as we coach them along. This instills in them that we have confidence in their abilities and that they can do it if they try.

Checklist For What To Bring On The First Day In The Preschool Program

Please label all items with your child's name.

Small Blanket for Rest Time	
Small Travel Size Pillow for Rest Time (optional)	
One Roll of 35mm Film	
Bath Towel	
Two Extra Shirt/Sweatshirt	
Two Extra Pants/Shorts	
Two Extra Pairs of Socks	
Two Extra Underpants	
Soft Sleep Toy (if needed)	
Family Photos to be used for a Family Poster	
2 inch Clear View Binder (only if you are new to ProKids)	
Toothbrush and Cover	
Tube of Toothpaste	
Diapers (if needed)	
Wipes (if needed)	

Preschool Program Daily Schedule

7:00am	Enter Opening Room	Greetings All learning centers are open for child choice
7:30am	Transition to Homebase	All learning centers are open for child choice
8:30am	Breakfast is Served	Family style dining with self serve encouraged
9:00am	Group Time	Whole Group in Library for a story or discussion Restroom Breaks
9:30am	Small Group Time	Group 1 Planned activities with primary care group All centers are open for child choice
10:30am	Small Group Time	Group 2 Outside time with primary care group Group 2 Planned activities with primary care group All centers are open for child choice
11:30am	Transitions	Group 1 Outside time with primary care group Clean up, prepare for lunch
11:40am	Lunch is Served	Family style dining with self serve encouraged
12:10pm	Transitions	Clean up, restroom breaks, brush teeth
12:30pm	Quiet Time	Transition to rest time, library is open
1:00pm	Rest Time	Quiet music and cots available for all children
3:00pm	Transitions	Restroom breaks, put cots away
3:15pm	Snack is Served	Family style dining with self serve encouraged
3:45pm	Transitions	Clean up, restroom breaks
4:00pm	Small Group Time	Group 1 Planned activities with primary care group All centers are open for child choice
4:30pm	Small Group Time	Group 2 Outside time with primary care group Group 2 Planned activities with primary care group All centers are open for child choice
5:00pm	Group Time	Group 1 Outside time with primary care group All center are open for child choice
6:00pm	Center Closes	

* Restroom breaks are also done as needed

The Benefits of Mixed-Age Grouping

OPPORTUNITY TO NURTURE

When we ask a five-year-old to be tolerant of a four-year-old's first fumbling efforts to put on his or her jacket, or a six-year-old to be appreciative of a five-year-old's early efforts to read, we have the beginnings of parent education. Our young children need real contexts in which their dispositions to be nurturing can be manifested and strengthened. Furthermore, the young children who are encouraged, comforted and nurtured by older children will be able to emulate their older classmates when they themselves become the older ones in a group. Children need opportunities not only to observe and imitate a wide range of competencies, but also to find companions among their peers who match, complement, or supplement their interests in different ways.

WAYS OF LEARNING

Single-age groups seem to create enormous normative pressures on the children and the teacher to expect all the children to possess the same knowledge and skills. There is a tendency in a homogeneous age group to penalize the children who fail to meet normative expectations. There is no evidence to show that a group of children who are all within a twelve-month age range can be expected to learn the same things, in the same way, on the same day, at the same time. The wide range of knowledge and skills that exists among children within a single-age group suggests that whole-group instruction, if overused, may not best serve children's learning.

On the other hand, the wider the age span in a group, the wider the range of behavior and performance likely to be accepted and tolerated by the adults as well as by the children themselves. In a mixed-age group, a teacher is more likely to address differences, not only between children but within each individual child. In a mixed-age group, it is acceptable for a child to be ahead of his or her same-age peers in math, for example, but behind them in reading, or social competence, or vice versa.

Research on social benefits indicates that children very early associate different expectations with different age groups. Experiments have shown that even a three-year-old, when shown pictures of older and younger children in hypothetical situations, will assign different kinds of behavior to an older child than to a younger child. For instance, younger children assign to older children instructive, leadership, helpful, and sympathizing roles, whereas older children assign to younger children the need for help and instruction. Thus in the mixed-age group, younger children perceive the older ones as being able to contribute something, and the older children see the younger ones as in need of their contributions. These mutually reinforcing perceptions create a climate of expected cooperation beneficial to the children, and to the teachers who otherwise feel they are doing all the giving.

Increasing the age range automatically increases the number of teachers available, for younger children particularly. One potential problem that may arise when children assume the role of teacher to other children is that some older children will give younger ones incorrect information, poor suggestions, or wrong advice. When teachers observe such interactions, they can benefit from learning where both children need additional help, and they can correct any misinformation that has been exchanged.

Results of experiments in which children worked in groups of three, either in same-age or mixed-age groups, have shown that in the latter, older children spontaneously facilitated other children's behavior. In a single-age triad, on the other hand, the same children spontaneously became domineering and tended

to engage in one-upmanship. When groups of children ranging in age from seven to nine years or from nine to eleven years were asked to make decisions, they went through the processes of reaching a consensus with far more organizing statements and more leadership behavior than children in same-age groups. When the same children dealt with identical kinds of tasks in same-age groups, there were more reports of bullying behavior. Other prosocial behaviors such as help-giving and sharing were more frequent in mixed-age groups. Turn taking was smoother, and there was greater social responsibility and sensitivity to others in mixed-age groups than in single-age groups (Chase & Doan, 1994).

Observations of four- and five-year-olds in a group found that when the teacher asked the older children who were not observing the class rules to remind the younger ones what the rules were, the older children's own "self-regulatory behavior" improved. The older children could become quite bossy, but the teacher has a responsibility to curb the children's bossiness in any group.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

In a mixed-age group, younger children are capable of participating and contributing to far more complex activities than they could initiate if they were by themselves. Once the older ones set up the activity, the younger ones can participate, even if they could not have initiated it.

Research indicates that mixed-age groups can provide a therapeutic environment for children who are socially immature. Younger children will less quickly rebuff an older immature child than the child's same-age mates. Younger children will allow an older child to be unsophisticated longer than will his or her age peers (Katz et al., 1990).

INTELLECTUAL BENEFITS

Even four-year-olds spontaneously change the way they speak to suit the age of the listener. They change the length of the sentence, the tone, and the words they use. Studies of cognitive development suggest that cognitive conflict arises when interacting children are at different levels of understanding, regardless of their ages. If two children are working on a task that one understands well and another does not, the latter is likely to learn from the former if he or she understands the task very well, and if they argue. Only if one understands something very well can explanations be varied during argument (Katz et al., 1990).

Parts of this article were taken from a digest by Lilian G. Katz written for Eric, The Educational Resources Information Center.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC



The World at Their Fingertips:

Education for Bright Horizons



The World at Their Fingertips

Education for Bright Horizons

Programs for Learning

Infants and Toddlers

Twos

Preschool

Kindergarten

School-Age

Multi-Age Approach to Back-up Care

Key Elements

Language Works

A Comprehensive Approach for Reading Success

Math Counts

Enriched Experiences in Mathematics

Science Rocks

Enriched Experiences in Science & Technology

PROJECTIONS

Creative Project Learning

Our World

Appreciating Diversity and the World in Which We Live

ArtSmart

Exploring the Arts

The World at Their Fingertips

Education for Bright Horizons

The World at Their Fingertips program for learning empowers children to become confident, successful, lifelong learners and secure, caring people. We help children to see the world as an invitation to learn, to grow, and to live fully – to see a world full of possibilities that are within their reach. We help children to approach school and academics with skills, confidence, and the drive to succeed.

Active Learners

Children are active learners who learn best from activities they plan and carry out themselves. They are little scientists and builders, acrobats and artisans who need active experience with the world of people and things; who need opportunities to set goals, plan, reflect, and take responsibility. From birth, they are communicators who need a world filled with books, language experiences, and great conversation. Our *The World at Their Fingertips* program for learning offers each child a world rich with discovery opportunities guided by skilled and sensitive teachers who recognize each child's individual strengths, optimum opportunities to learn, and what he or she needs to succeed in school and life.

Teachers are Mentors

Teachers at a Bright Horizons Family Center are members of the BFamily Team who provide the environment and experiences from which children learn. They are there to create experiences appropriate for each child, ask stimulating questions, provide challenge, and help children find new answers and new opportunities. Teaching also involves helping children achieve the confidence and self-discipline to develop increasingly more sophisticated social and intellectual skills and knowledge that prepare them for success in school. *The World at Their Fingertips* program for learning develops and builds off the talents of creative teachers and the wider resources of a talented company committed to early childhood education.

A Program Based in Theory and Research

The World at Their Fingertips program for learning is a comprehensive, integrated program based on solid research and the understandings developed through the work of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Howard Gardner, Erik Erickson, and other leading developmental theorists and educators, who emphasize the importance of active learning, language, and teachers as mentors and facilitators. The Bright Horizons Family Center program recognizes that there is no clear separation between learning and caring, play and work. Each child's entire experience in the program is important to success in school and life and each child's experience is uniquely his or her own.

Not “How Smart is This Child?” But “How is This Child Smart?”

The concept of a single unified intelligence has been replaced by the understanding that there are multiple intelligences: ways of knowing and achieving in the world. Success in school and success in life draw upon multiple intelligences, that are interrelated and interactive. Optimum development requires identifying a child's strengths and using those strengths to help the child succeed in school and life. The program is individualized to meet each child's needs.

Appropriate Learning Environments

The World at Their Fingertips creates developmentally, culturally, and individually appropriate learning environments in which each child learns what the world is like, how it works, what he/she is capable of, and his/her place in it. The daily schedules, learning centers, and the way learning is incorporated into homebase furnishings and the playground are all carefully planned to allow children to independently explore, discover, and learn through developmentally appropriate experience. The routines and environment are organized to teach: labeled shelves use color, symbols, and language; science experiences are built into the playground; and language and numbers are built into meals and clean-up. Children are confronted with new challenges and have opportunities to practice and master skills through play and exploration. Teachers prepare and rotate the learning centers and provide large and small group experiences, extended projects, and field trips to enrich children's learning. Themes and directions emerge from the interests and experiences of the children, families, and teachers. Field trips and enrichment programs extend children's experience into the world beyond the center.

A Comprehensive Approach and an Educational Sensibility

The World at Their Fingertips is both an approach and a sensibility that infuses interactions and the planned environment. Individual elements like *Language Works*, *Math Counts*, *Science Rocks*, *Our World*, *ArtSmart*, and *Projections* are integrated into each of the developmental programs and into the sensibility of the center. They are not isolated into artificial, discrete components.

Documentation and Assessment

Documentation of learning experiences and child assessment are critical program requirements of *The World at Their Fingertips*. Teachers and children document homebase experiences, projects, and field trips using journals, documentation panels, and other means of public display.

As children develop and progress through the program, individualized child observation and assessment are important features guiding parent/teacher/child goal setting. Assessment characterizes a child's strengths and achievements as well as noting areas for growth. Each child develops a portfolio of accomplishments that begins at enrollment and continues throughout their experience at Bright Horizons. Kindergarten assessments are tailored to reflect the expectations of the local schools.

Parents are Full Partners

Parents are full partners in every aspect of curriculum: participating in creating child development profiles, helping to set goals and priorities, planning and evaluation, and sustaining the learning through coordinated experiences at home.

The Preschool Program

The Preschool Program is a comprehensive program. The learning environment is primarily based on *The Creative Curriculum*, developed by Teaching Strategies Inc, in use in high-quality early education settings throughout the United States, Canada, and Australia. Because young children learn best through active interaction with the physical and social environment, the curriculum is focused on developing an experientially rich, developmentally appropriate environment that responds to the creativity of children and teachers. At the core of the *Creative Curriculum* lie well planned learning centers that allow for child choice and self-directed play, small groups, and supportive teaching designed to ensure future academic success. The development of language, mathematical reasoning, and scientific thought are emphasized throughout the centers. Changes to the learning environment, activities, and projects reflect emerging interests. Learning centers result in the guided experiences that encompass all the skills and understandings necessary for optimum development and success in school.

Typical centers include:

Language/Library	Computers
Construction/Blocks	Cooking
Dramatic Play	Outdoor Learning
Art/Creative Expression	Music and Movement
Sensory: Sand and Water	Manipulatives

Learning centers are supplemented by any number of independent learning stations designed for use by one or two children.

Throughout the day, children make self-directed and guided choices using BFamily Choice Systems, participate in small groups and projects, join in circle-times with the whole group, and reflect upon and document their learning experiences. Teachers build upon, rather than direct or control, the thoughts and actions of children. Children are guided to critical learning experiences that form the building blocks of healthy development. Using the *Creative Curriculum* and knowledge of the children and families as a framework, teachers use their talent and expertise to design, adapt, and invent learning centers that best serve the children in the room.

The Preschool Program incorporates *Language Works*, *Math Counts*, *Science Rocks*, *Our World*, and *ArtSmart* into the environment, daily activities, and projects that organize the children's experience.

Selected Elements

Language Works

A Comprehensive Language Approach

Language Works is a comprehensive language approach that infuses *The World at Their Fingertips*. Young children need a world rich in spoken and written language. A whole language approach involves children in continual learning about language as it becomes meaningful to them. Long before learning to read, children are immersed in language activities that lead to a lifelong appreciation and respect for the power and beauty of language. Language is a vital part of every interaction, every aspect of curriculum, every day. Words spoken aloud and in print are respected and enjoyed, for their power, beauty, and utility – as a means to order and understand the world.

Language Works engages children in a continuum of language experiences that challenge their emerging skills and knowledge. Rhyming with toddlers, puppet shows, creating a homebase newspaper in a pre-kindergarten class, composing Haiku with kindergartners, acting out plays, and corresponding with national (and international) pen pals are all a part of the magic of *Language Works*.

In the *Language Works* approach, teachers are trained to be alert for opportunities to extend the children's ideas and interests into opportunities to read, write, speak or listen. Language is in the air, and the sounds, meanings, and pure joy of words vibrate throughout the center. Look around and you will see books, signs, posters, labels, directions, and the stories of children. You will see and hear conversations of adults listening to children, enjoying poetry and fingerplays, children making and listening to tapes, and older children reading to younger children. Children will be writing, typing, and using the computer. Even toddlers and twos will compose stories for teacher scribes and "write" their own versions.

Recognizing that children and families are not all the same, *Language Works* assumes that that no one approach to reading works for all children. Teachers work closely with families to make sure each child is successful in developing strong literacy skills.

Language Works extends into the child's home in the acknowledgement of the critical importance that parents play as the child's first and most important teacher. We encourage and support parent's efforts though information, materials, and shared expectations for extensive, quality, language interactions.

Math Counts

Enriched Experiences in Mathematics

The World at Their Fingertips includes an emphasis on developing a solid foundation in mathematical skills and reasoning. *Math Counts* is an approach that encourages all of the adults in the child's life to look for and create opportunities to help children understand the math inherent in their everyday lives. From a toddler's conception of more cookies to the one-to-one correspondence in setting a table, children are helped to become increasingly competent in numerical skills and reasoning.

Math Counts establishes learning centers, projects, activities, and guidelines for teacher interactions that all promote the developmental growth necessary for success in school. Children learn number recognition, one-to-one correspondence, seriation, ordination, and other fundamental math skills.

As with *Language Works*, *Math Counts* recognizes that parents are the primary intellectual influence on children. We encourage and support parent's efforts to promote the child's greater understanding of mathematical principles and the use of numbers to navigate an increasingly complicated world.

Science Rocks

Enriched Experiences in Science and Technology

The World at Their Fingertips includes an ever-growing collection of science and discovery opportunities. *Science Rocks* makes science come alive by taking advantage of the child's experience with science in daily life: the physics of falling blocks, the chemistry of mixing paint or frost on the windows, or the biology of growing plants and animals. *Science Rocks* includes special learning centers and learning stations, projects, activities, and guidelines for teacher interactions that stimulate a child's sense of wonder and challenge a child's problem-solving skills. *Science Rocks* encourages children to observe, question, experiment, and reflect.

Science Rocks activities include experiments from raising butterflies and frogs, to tending rabbits, snakes, and mourning doves. Preschool children may be measuring rainfall or shadows, growing and weighing a "crop" of beans or sunflowers, or timing the evaporation of a wet footprint. Toddlers and twos may watch chickens hatch, play games with shadows, or make music with wind chimes. Kindergarten children explore seasons on the Internet with children in Australia back from their summer Christmas vacation or discuss 24-hour sunlight with Inuit children in Kotzebue, Alaska. On field trips and at the center, computers, microscopes, tape measures, and even video cameras help children explore and communicate the mysteries of the forces, properties, and principles of the world around them.

PROJECTIONS

Creative Project Learning

Projects take the child beyond the usual child care time and space, outside of the tidy framework of a work time or day, and beyond the limits of learning centers. A project is an adventure in learning fueled by the children's interests and enthusiasm for making sense of their experience; an in-depth study of an idea, topic, or phenomenon that a group or an individual child finds interesting.

Project work is important to enhance and complement what children learn from spontaneous play and instruction. Projects broaden and deepen the children's understanding, sending them off to explore how the world works and apply emerging skills and understandings. Projects are filled with problems to solve; hypotheses to be tested, charted, graphed, or pictured; and discoveries to be communicated.

Projects are possible with almost all ages. Two-years-olds may investigate the mysteries of weather over a few days. A group of preschoolers may spend a week creating a dinosaur habitat or a quilt. Kindergarten children may construct an inflatable dome, in the process learning about volume, air pressure, and adhesives. School-age children's projects may extend over weeks or even months on an infinite number of topics, such as putting on a play or creating a restaurant. Projects may involve desktop publishing, sales and banking, as well as a huge amount of delicate social negotiation. In all projects, planning and communication of activities and results extend the learning far beyond the specific topic. Documentation by teachers and children is an essential element in the project process that ensures reflective, critical thinking.

Our World

Appreciating Diversity and the World in Which We Live

Our World characterizes the Bright Horizons Family Center's commitment to instill in each child a respect for all living things and the environment we inhabit. *Our World* recognizes and values the rich cultural heritage that people bring to the center. We understand that individuals belong to communities and develop within a culture.

Our World is a vital part of *The World at Their Fingertips* and includes materials depicting people from many different places doing many different things, and people with all sorts of abilities and challenges living their lives. Books, music, games, learning centers, enrichment programs, and a wide range of activities help children learn respect for our

world, its diverse people, and the environment in which we live. Children experience the sights, sounds, and textures of other cultures and are encouraged to explore experiences that might not be part of their everyday lives.

Multicultural education and respect for diversity is more than teaching information directly. The *Our World* approach is designed to encourage teachers to move beyond teaching awareness of other cultures to providing experiences that help children understand the ideas and issues presented by diversity at their individual developmental level. *Our World* creates and maintains an environment that says, “everybody is welcome here, everyone can feel at home here” (parents as well as children). As they participate in group living and special activities, children learn about respect and fairness, tolerance and acceptance, and to value their own culture and their own individual qualities. The *Our World* sensibility encourages children to notice and think about injustice, and challenges them to do something about unfairness toward people in the world.

Respect for the natural world is also an important element of the *Our World* approach. Children are taught to respect all living things and the environment we inhabit. They learn about conservation of resources through the practices of the center and through special activities and projects.

ArtSmart

Appreciating the Arts

ArtSmart is a recognition that young children can develop an appreciation of art, music, theater, and dance. Comprehensive education includes learning to distinguish and enjoy the artistic expression of quality artists: the distinctly different visions of a Monet and a Jackson Pollock, the dance of Alvin Ailey and Swan Lake, the music of Mozart and Gershwin, and the drama inherent in the best of children’s literature.

ArtSmart takes advantage of local and national resources to introduce children to artists of all kinds and seeks to uncover the children’s unique talents to both appreciate and express artistic vision.

Tracking Child Development

How do we come to know a child? Obviously we learn about each child through what we observe day-to-day in the homebase. But our program is only one of the child's settings and a rather atypical one at that: a group setting mostly organized by age. We also need to recognize that we come to know and understand the child through our partnership with parents. Parents see the child in a range of settings over time and bring to light a much broader context of development; their views are essential. Our knowledge comes from seeking to understand and appreciate the child together, sharing observations of the child's experiences and behavior at home and at the center. We begin tracking development at the initial enrollment conference and establish the development of personal care plans. This effort continues through daily communication with parents, primary caregiver observations, documentation of experience in the homebase, and discussions during the planning cycle.

Development is a Journey, Not a Race

When we are in settings with lots of children of the same age, in a society that sees time as a precious commodity and *getting ahead* and *being first* as prime goals, it is hard not to see development as a race to achieve milestones. But development is not a race and *earlier is not better*, nor is earlier generally an indicator of future development. Children benefit from the individual, measured pacing of the journey, not from achieving developmental milestones at the earliest opportunity.

What are the Key Components you use to track development?

- Initiative
- Social Relations
- Creative Representation
- Music and Movement
- Language and Literacy
- Logic and Mathematics

Sense of Self (Infant/Toddler) – Initiative (Preschool/Kindergarten)

Through their actions with objects and interactions with trusted caregivers, infants and toddlers gradually begin to understand that they themselves exist as separate and individual beings. As children develop, they construct an image of themselves as distinct and capable people who can both influence and respond to their immediate world. Initiative is the child's ability to begin and follow through on tasks. It is the power to make and carry out choices and decisions. As children develop, they initiate and carry out activities of increasing complexity, solving problems and coordinating their activities and ideas with others.

Social Relations

Children's social interactions begin as soon as they discover the presence of others in their world. Infants and toddlers learn about how human beings act and treat one another through their day-to-day interactions with parents, family members, caregivers, peers, and other adults. These early social relationships influence their lifelong approach to people, the manner in which they develop attachments, become empathetic, make friends, work cooperatively, lead and follow, work through conflict, and express feelings naturally and appropriately.

Creative Representation

Representation is the process by which children depict objects and experiences through imitation, pretending, building, artwork, and written language. Infants and toddlers build a critical body of direct experience from their ongoing sensory-motor explorations – acting on objects with their whole bodies and all their senses and repeating these actions at will. They learn to imitate the actions of others, interpret pictures and photographs of actions and objects they have experienced, and begin to use actions and materials to show or represent something they know about their world. Gradually, with repeated experiences, they begin to form mental images of the object or person. This process is the beginning of representation – the ability to internalize or mentally picture an absent person, object, or action. Representing is important developmentally because it indicates that young children, who tend to see things in very concrete terms, are moving towards a more abstract understanding of their world – from the world that they only understand through their senses to the world that they understand through symbolic thought. This area tracks how children represent their thoughts and feelings.

Movement (Infant /Toddler) – Music and Movement (Preschool/Kindergarten)

Motor activities are important to all areas of child development, including, but not limited to, physical development. For infants and toddlers developing sensory-motor skills, movement plays a major role in all learning. Their emerging sense of themselves as doers and people of action is strongly connected to their developing ability to control their motions, communicate through the language of gesture and action, handle objects with ease, and move at will from place to place. Children explore and represent themselves and the world around them through movement. They develop important physical abilities by becoming aware of what their bodies can do when they move with and without objects. As they move, they acquire an understanding of the concepts and language that are connected to actions, positions, and space. This area also tracks their ability to respond to music.

Communication and Language (Infant/Toddler) – Language and Literacy (Preschool/Kindergarten)

The development of communication and language abilities – listening, speaking, reading, writing – is critical to a child's success in school and life. This area tracks children through their earliest communication efforts in speaking and listening, in how they show interest in the spoken and printed word and stories, following directions, vocabulary, and beginning to read and write.

Exploration and Early Logic (Infant/Toddler) – Logic and Mathematics (Preschool/Kindergarten)

From infancy, children explore the properties of things, relationships, and concepts of number, space, and time. They are observers by nature; much of what they learn, right from the beginning, results from keen observation and from their natural inclination to learn through sensory exploration and physical manipulation of objects. As they develop, they begin to order and classify the elements in their world. They construct their own understanding of concepts in logic and mathematics as they work with materials, people, events, and ideas. They learn the language of the basic concepts of logic and mathematics from the people in their lives.

Preschool Developmental Milestones

Initiative	Social Relations	Creative Representation
Expressing Choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> indicates desires using short sentences indicates desired activity in short sentence indicates in short sentence how plan will be carried out Solving Problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tries one method of solving problems shows some persistence in solving problems Engaging In Complex Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows interest in simple materials and activities organizes active play, while alone, involving two or more steps acting alone, carries out complex sequences in play Cooperating in Program Routines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sometimes follows program routines participates when directed to do so participates in routines without being asked 	Relating to Adults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responds to familiar adults in program initiates interactions with familiar adults sustains interactions with familiar adults Relating to Other Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responds when other children initiates initiates interactions with other children sustains interactions with other children Making Friends With Other Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies some children by name identifies a classmate as a friend is identified by as classmate as a friend Engages in Social Problem Solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> finds acceptable ways of getting attention without hitting requests adult help in solving problems with other children sometimes tries to solve problems with other children without adult help Understands and Expresses Feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expresses feeling, but sometimes in inappropriate ways shows awareness of feelings of others usually expresses feeling in acceptable ways 	Making and Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explores making and building materials uses materials to make or build something uses materials to make something and names or demonstrates Drawing and Painting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explores drawing and painting materials draws or paints simple representations draws or paints with some details Pretends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses one object, actions or sound to represent another assumes the role of someone or something else engages in cooperative play with others

Preschool Developmental Milestones

Music and Movement	Language and Literacy	Logic and Mathematics
<p>Exhibiting Body Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows coordination in climbing and walking alternates feet while walking up stairs but holds on to banister moves around while manipulating an object <p>Exhibits Manual Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses appropriate fingers and hand motions to pick up an object fits materials together and takes apart materials manipulates small object with precision <p>Imitating Movements to a Steady Beat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> imitates single movements one at a time responds to the beat of a song with simple movements responds to music with complex movements <p>Follows Music and Movement Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> follows single spoken music instruction follows two part spoken music movements follows complex spoken music movement 	<p>Understands Speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> follows simple instructions responds to simple sentences participates in classroom conversations <p>Speaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simple sentences uses sentences that indicate two or more separate ideas uses sentences to indicate two or more ideas with descriptive details <p>Shows Interest in Reading Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows interest when story is read ask to have stories read answers questions about a story <p>Demonstrating Knowledge About Books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> holds books and turns pages picture reads pointing at pictures follows print on a page with finger <p>Beginning Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies some letters or numbers reads several words <p>Beginning Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> writes using squiggles copies identifiable letters writes a few words other than own name 	<p>Sorting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> groups identical items together groups items that are the same in some ways but different in others groups same items together and describes the action <p>Uses the Words <i>not</i>, <i>some</i> and <i>all</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses but sometimes incorrectly correctly uses these words uses the word "not" to exclude an object <p>Arranges Materials in Gradual Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arranges two or three objects in order arranges four or more objects in order places new item within an ordered set of objects <p>Using Comparison Words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> follows direction that use comparisons sometimes uses comparisons correctly uses comparison words correctly <p>Comparing Numbers of Objects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> compares groups of five correctly compares two groups of up to five items uses one-to-one matching to see if groups are equal <p>Counting Objects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> correctly counts up to ten out loud correctly counts up to ten objects correctly counts over ten objects <p>Describes Spatial Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses words to describe position uses words to describe direction uses words to describe relative distance between <p>Describes Sequence and Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> plans the next event describes a series of events in correct order compares time periods