

Forget What Others Say, A Child's Work is Play

By Brooke Amo

How does one go about finding a curriculum that custom fits their schools teachers, students, and philosophy? How do you take the beautiful occurrences and activities that the children participate in each day and try and fit them into a neat little box or teacher manual? In my opinion, the answer is you can't. After years of racking my brain on how to marry what our amazing teachers already do, and keep up with the increasing academic demands on preschool children, I believe we already have the answer. We don't need to change how we teach or what we teach, we need to change how we communicate what we teach so people know why what we do is best practice for preschoolers.

At The Charlotte Jewish Preschool we learn through play. Sounds as simple as it gets, doesn't it? Well, the fact of the matter is that it is that simple for the students. The students skip through the CJP doors, they enter their rooms and they start playing. Then (according to the students), they eat lunch and then they play again. For the teachers it is a different story. As professionals, our teachers know that children learn through carefully designed play. It all lies within our curriculum framework and the environment we facilitate. This framework is flexible, developmentally appropriate, and relevant to preschoolers. We have a set of objectives that we teach to our students in various contexts to include various intelligences. These goals are our end game. It is what we strive for each child to learn before they leave our school and move on to enter Kindergarten. Here are some examples of our curricular goals:

Social/Emotional Goals

*cultivate, engage and sustain positive relationships with adults and peers

*demonstrate self-direction and independence

Literacy Goals

*detect rhyme and alliteration
*develop knowledge of the alphabet and alphabetic principles

Language Goals

*demonstrate receptive and expressive language skills and communication strategies

Gross motor

*develop motor planning and control

Fine motor

*utilize various tools for writing and drawing

Mathematical Goals

*develop number concepts and number sense

*explore spatial relationships

Science Goals

*identify weather seasons and



discuss the effects on our lives
*explore various animals, habitats, and life cycles

Cognition Goals

*explore cause and effect
*apply knowledge of experience to need context

Judaica

*Chagim – explore Jewish rituals, Torah teachings, traditions and culture through the celebration of Jewish holidays

Because students develop differently, we do not place deadlines on specific accomplishments. However, we do use indicators to aid us in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses so that we can work with each child on their individual needs. How do we get there? Creativity, hard work, careful planning, and execution is the way. Every team (our teams are made up of lead teachers at each age-level) at the CJP has a planning session once a month. During this time collaborate best practices while taking the themes and weave them through the goals above. Planning promotes consistency and teamwork throughout the school. It also takes the vast amount of knowledge and experience that our teachers have and "spreads the wealth."

CJP uses thematic units for an array of reasons. We believe a common theme keeps student learning focused on a broad concept while touching on specific knowledge and skills throughout. It is also a belief that teaching thematically is motivational for both children and teachers. It allows both teachers and children to really delve into a content area, making it more exciting for teachers to teach and students to learn. We make our delivery through themes so we integrate content areas in a way that makes sense to children (through play). This in turn provides them with a more rich understanding of a subject and more meaning, and a ton of fun! Furthermore, teaching thematically challenges our teachers

to create lessons that connect to each students' multiple intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, naturalist, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal.

Our highly-qualified teachers at The Charlotte Jewish Preschool work tirelessly to keep our stu-

dents engaged in learning and more importantly assist in developing them into mensches. Through teamwork and collaboration our teachers nurture an environment in which learning is organic, whether in subtle or overt ways. In the meantime, our students love coming to school

where they "play" all day.

The Charlotte Jewish Preschool Open House and Open Enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year on Wednesday, January 14 at 9:30 AM. For more information, please contact Alyson Kalik at 704-944-6776 or akalik@shalom-charlotte.org. ☆

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Creative minds have always been known to survive any kind of bad training.

-Anna Freud