

The Den Curriculum

September

Unit 1 Title: Introduction to School

Length of Unit: 2- 4 weeks

Adapted from New Fairfield Public Schools & Norwich Public Schools Preschool Curriculum

Unit 1: Introduction to School	
Unit Overview	<p>The purpose of this unit is to recognize that for many children and their families this is their first experience of entering school. It is important for these children to be in a safe and positive environment that promotes their social-emotional development. In this Unit of Study children will learn to become part of their classroom community. They will begin to learn school expectations and how to form relationships with peers and adults at school. This Unit of Study focuses mainly on three learning domains from the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards: Cognition Domain, Social/Emotional Domain, and Physical and Health Domain.</p>
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	<p>COGNITION DOMAIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why do we have rules? ● How do we play with toys? ● How do we take care of things in our school? ● What happens in school? ● What are some of your favorite activities in school? (This will be after they have had time to experience school activities) ● How is home different from school?
	<p>SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT DOMAIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Who takes care of me at school? ● How do we play with each other? ● How do we take care of each other?

**LEARNING
PROGRESSIONS
(STANDARDS)**

COGNITION DOMAIN

- ***Engagement with Environments, People and Objects***
 - **C.48.2** Maintain interest in exploring specific topics over time.
 - **C.60.2** Express interest in learning about a specific topic over time
 - **C.60.3** Engage in preferred activities and some non-preferred activities for longer periods of time. Remain with some high interest activities 15 minutes or longer
- ***Cooperation with Peers in Learning Experiences***
 - **C.48.4** Engage in and complete learning activities with peers
 - **C.48.5** Help and cooperate in group
 - **C.60.5** Plan and complete learning activity with a peer
 - **C.60.6** Model or teach peers how to use materials or complete task

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT DOMAIN

- ***Trusting Relationships***
 - **SE.48.1** Engage in interactions with less familiar adults
 - **SE.60.1** Seek help and approval from a wider array of adults in trusted roles
- ***Managing Separation***
 - **SE.48.2** Manage most separations without distress and adjust to new settings in the presence of trusted adult
 - **SE.60.2** Through expanding relationships with adults (e.g., teacher, play group leader, friends' caregivers), exhibit comfort in exploring more new settings, although they may need to periodically check-in with a familiar adult

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH DOMAIN

- ***Safety and Responsibility***
 - **PH.48.9** Understand basic safety rules at home and in familiar settings (e.g. school, library and playground). Generally follow rules and bring other children's rule-breaking to the attention of adults
 - **PH.60.7** Understanding the reason for most basic safety rules at home, in familiar settings and in the community
- ***Dressing and Hygiene***
 - **PH.48.10** Manage most aspects of dressing, toileting, hand washing and tooth brushing independently with minimal caregiver reminders to guide and support
 - **PH.60.8** Typically manage own dressing, toileting and basic hygiene

<p>FOCUS AREAS</p>	<p>1. School Environment (classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, playground, office, nurse’s office, OT/PT) 2. Routines (clean-up, centers, daily schedule, transitions, self-care) 3. Relationships (developing a community, sharing, taking turns)</p>
<p>KEY VOCABULARY</p>	<p>1. Expectations (manners: respect, wait / patience) 2. Community (names of centers, classroom jobs) 3. Routines (arrival, dismissal, absent, announcements (loudspeaker / intercom) routine/ schedule, transitions) 4. Environment and people (gym/ cafeteria, principal, staffs’ names, office, nurse, bathroom, lockdown, fire-drill, alarm, siren, evacuation)</p>

<p>Key Knowledge My students will know. . .</p>	<p>Key Skills My students will be able to (do). . .</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● That school has routines ● That school has expectations/rules ● That school is a community of learners ● That we develop relationships with adults and peers in school ● That school is a safe place ● Everyone has a role in the school environment ● That school is a place for learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To follow classroom routines ● Identify classmates ● Identify teachers/staff ● Ask for help when needed ● Explore classroom centers individually and with peers ● Take turns with assistance ● Transition from one activity to the next ● Engage in activities for longer periods of time ● Separate from parents

[Unit Assessment Checklist](#)

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND EXPERIENCES

(Multiple means of representation, expression and engagement)

- Give children opportunities to play with other children and to work together to create things and reach a common goal
 - Foster this by providing toys and materials that encourage cooperative use and pretend play
- Allow time for children to share their experiences
- Provide family photos or objects from home, support children's comfort with separation through use of visuals and stories
- Go for walks around the school to learn about the different areas of the school
- Encourage children's curiosity and expand the learning opportunity with rich vocabulary and open-ended questions
- Teach the importance of caring for their school environment
 - e.g. Engage children in completing classroom jobs, (sweeping, putting away toys, etc.)
- Routines/Expectations
 - Centers "Field Trip" that explains the purpose of each center and how to appropriately use the materials there
 - Develop Classroom Rules with the children's input
 - Provide a daily schedule with pictures/visuals
 - Focus on appropriate behaviors for the various areas of the school (classroom, cafeteria, hallways, playground, etc)
 - Use the same visual and environmental cues throughout the day, such as singing the same clean up song or pointing to the bathroom and modeling washing hands when it is time to wash up before snack.
 - Maintain predictable routines, and also provide flexible schedules and opportunities for children to make choices (e.g.: provide materials that can be used in multiple ways)
 - Use consistent greeting/goodbye routines and learn small phrases in child's home language to reassure them family and caregivers will be back to get them
 - Clean-Up (e.g. snack, centers, work, etc.)
- Supporting Social/Emotional
 - Make a point of engaging in **one-on-one time** with each child
 - Encourage returning 4's to take a leadership role by assisting new or younger children
 - Encourage positive attitudes about mistakes, point out the many different ways that things get done
 - Encourage children to attempt tasks outside of their comfort zone, offer support such as auditory/visual cues, increase complexity as needed, comment positively about children's perseverance
 - Share in children's feelings (e.g. excitement about their discoveries, support children to manage feelings of distress)
 - Interact with children by responding to speech, touch, scent, movement, verbalizations and facial expressions that is paired with language
 - Use body language and facial expressions to show warmth and caring
 - Describe children's feelings with feeling words

- Encourage children to ask for help from a range of people
- Snack Time conversations
 - Adults should facilitate conversations (if necessary)
- Community Circle (Linear Calendar, Foundations letters, Message of the day)
 - Hello Song / Welcome Greeting and Game
- Cognition
 - Provide tasks where the goal is trying different strategies rather than right or wrong answers
 - Give children adequate time to respond to questions, directions, greetings, etc.
 - Model the use of “Wondering Aloud” about the environment
 - Support children to find answers to their questions, support them to brainstorm ways they can do that e.g., ask someone, read a book, try another way.
 - Acknowledge children when they are exploring, “I see you playing with blocks. That looks like so much fun!”
- Centers/Transitions
 - Develop the ability to “Stay and Play” (Executive Function skills)
 - Use Social Stories (e.g. Centers and materials used at specific centers, playground rules, initiating play)
- Videos/Pictures of children playing in centers and experiences with routine

<p>DIFFERENTIATION</p>	<p>Children with Disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that children have ample opportunity to explore through different modalities (e.g., provide children with hearing impairments opportunities to explore through touch and visual means, provide children with visual impairments objects that make different noises) ● Provide children with ways to make choices about their environment ● Structure cooperative experiences with peers ● Give children adequate time to respond to questions, directions, greetings, etc. ● Use concrete items to help children learn new vocabulary ● Use a multisensory approach to build trusting relationships, using speech, touch, scent, movement ● Use frequent verbal descriptors of environments ● Allow children to hold and touch objects as they experience new environments ● Encourage exploration through auditory and visual cues ● Observe children to determine preferences; use those preferences to draw children into participation in new environments ● Support children’s comfort with separation through the use of visuals and stories
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Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

- Provide materials that reflect a child's home language and culture to promote exploration (e.g., familiar foods in a dramatic play area, books in home language, signs in home language in block area)
- Create buddy systems by pairing children who speak more English with children who speak less
- Demonstrate interest in the child's attempts at interaction and activity
- Be consistent in using the same visual and environmental cues throughout the day, such as singing the same clean-up song or pointing to the bathroom and modeling washing hands when it is time to wash up before snack
- Observe children carefully. How they approach new situations will be impacted by their willingness to take risks. This level varies for each child. Be aware of these differences and provide additional support for children who are naturally more hesitant
- Use body language and facial expressions to show warmth and caring
- As much as possible, keep routines and schedules predictable, using visual cues to help children understand
- Use gestures paired with language
- Learn small phrases in children's home language to reassure them that you can help or that their mom, dad, grandpa, aunt, or uncle will be back to get them
- Allow children to stay close to you to help them develop trust
- Utilize technology (Google translation and Youtube) to help with communicating and to offer opportunities to hear stories in their home language.

RESOURCES

Fiction

- If You Take a Mouse to School (Laura Numeroff)
- Pete the Kitty's First Day of Preschool (Eric Litwin)
- Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes (Eric Litwin)
- Pete the Cat and the New Guy (Eric Litwin)
- Mouse's First Day of School (Lauren Thompson)
- Rainbow Fish (Marcus Pfister)
- Come Along Daisy (Jane Simmons)
- The Land of Many Colors (Rita Pocock) (This book is about working together, reviews colors, sharing, acceptance, and problem solving)
- Friends (Helme Heine)
- The Little Mouse, The Red, Ripe Strawberry and The Big Hungry Bear (Audrey Wood)
- Bear's New Friend (Karma Wilson)
- Little Blue and Little Yellow (Leo Lionni)
- Corduroy (Don Freeman)
- How Do Dinosaurs Go to School (Jane Yolen & Mark Teague)
- Dinosaur Starts School (Deborah Allwright)
- Why am I Blue? (Kalli Dakos)

Nonfiction

- Preschool Day Hooray! (Linda Leopold Strauss)
- Talk and Work It Out (Learning to Get Along Series) (Cheri J. Meiners)
- Making Friends (Fred Rogers)

Websites / Videos

- [Pete the Cat and the New Guy](#)
- [The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry and The Big Hungry Bear](#)
- [The Rainbow Fish read by Ernest Borgnine](#)
- [If You Take A Mouse to School](#)
- [Hello / Make A Circle Song](#)
- [Hello Friend](#)
- [Good Morning / How are you?](#)
- [Now It's Time to Say Hello](#)
- [Dan St. Romain](#)

Songs

- [Intro to School Song](#)
- Nursery rhymes
 - Hey Diddle, Diddle (Various Authors)
 - Jack and Jill (Various Authors)
 - Mary Had a Little Lamb (Various Authors)

**ENGAGING
FAMILIES**

- Send out and review parent questionnaire
- Meet-And-Greet, Orientation, Home Visits
 - Families and students come in and meet the teacher and paras as well as having an opportunity to explore their new classroom
- Developing a class book which depicts classroom staff and children and adults in the larger school community engaged in daily activities (including a photo)
 - Imagine a book that has a photo with the child at home with a caretaker and then a picture of the child with a caretaker at school
 - This is great for helping to manage separation
- Send videos/pictures before school begins of the school environment and/or people
- Send home activity for children to bring in first day of school for class bulletin board (i.e. color little mouse or Pete the Cat)
- Ask families to send in a picture of child and family member to hang on bulletin boards and in cubbies (can be a photograph or a picture the child or family member has drawn)
- Utilize social media to keep parents informed (ex: Remind app.)
- Send videos, pictures and emails from our first days of school to families (update on how it is going)
 - Ask families how they feel about first days
 - Ask families to share what their child has shared about their first month of school