



CLARKSDALE MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.cmsdschools.org

PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN STUDENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

Back to the B.A.G.I.C.G. - Rooted in Growth

Building "A" Scholars in Clarksdale Schools



526 Choctaw Street., P. O. Box, Clarksdale, MS 38614

Phone: 662.627.8500 - Fax: 662.624.9405

Dear Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Parents,

We're excited to welcome you and your child to the Clarksdale Municipal School District family. Starting school is a big step, and we're honored to be part of this important moment in your child's life.

Our schools are focused on helping every student grow academically, socially, and emotionally. In Pre-K and Kindergarten, we strive to establish a solid foundation that fosters learning and success in the years to come. Just as important, we want your child to enjoy learning and feel safe and supported every day.

We also value the partnership between home and school. You'll hear from us regularly through notes, phone calls, newsletters, and conferences. If you ever have a question or concern, please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher or principal.

Thank you for choosing Clarksdale Municipal School District. We look forward to a great school year together.

Sincerely,

Toya Harrell-Matthews

Toya Harrell-Matthews, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Education

MISSION

We exist to meet every need of every student.

VISION

We envision all students graduating ready for college and careers.

GOALS

Goal 1: Every CMSD student will graduate ready for college and careers.

Goal 2: Every CMSD student will meet growth and/or score proficient on all state assessments.

Goal 3: Increase district rating to a B or higher with all schools being rated a C or higher.

Goal 4: CMSD will provide students with a comprehensive educational experience.



Clarksdale Municipal School District Elementary School Listings

Central Office

526 S. Choctaw Street

Clarksdale, MS 38614

Toya Harrell-Matthews, Ph.D. Superintendent

Booker T. Washington Elementary School

1806 Sunflower Avenue

Clarksdale, MS 38614

Bridney Johnson, Principal

George H. Oliver Elementary School

871 Ritchie Street

Clarksdale, MS 38614

Regina Chess, Principal

Kirkpatrick Elementary School

1101 Smith Street

Clarksdale, MS 38614

Dr. Adrienne Hudson, Principal

Learning Environment

The Clarksdale Municipal School District's pre-kindergarten program provides a learning environment that affords each child opportunities to develop:

- Self-confidence through successful learning experiences;
- Responsibility for one's own behavior;
- Positive attitudes toward learning;
- A sense of responsibility for completing assigned tasks
- The ability to share and cooperate with others;
- Language/literacy skills and strategies;
- Mathematical thinking about patterns and relationships, order and predictability, and logic and meaning;
- The ability to observe, explore, discover, predict, and solve problems through concrete learning experiences;
- An understanding of the many aspects of their cultural and environmental world;
- Health-promoting habits and routines;
- Physically through the use of large and small muscle activities
- Aesthetic expression and appreciation through art, music, and dramatic play;
- The natural curiosity young children use to make sense of their world;
- The early concepts and skills that build the foundation for the CMSD kindergarten curriculum



Curriculum

The Pre-K program uses Opening the World of Learning (OWL) curriculum. This is a comprehensive curriculum that prepares children for kindergarten with ongoing assessment of researched-based success predictors and playful, purposeful, and personalized instruction.

OWL is based upon the belief that immersion in a learning-rich environment is critical but not sufficient. The environment and interactions must be thoughtful and purposeful. All parts of the day should be considered opportunities for learning, and the teacher should know the curriculum, content, instructional strategies, and individual children well enough to be responsive in a variety of situations.

Program Features

OWL's research-based curriculum seamlessly weaves solid content that captures children's natural curiosity about the world into an activity-centered day. The curriculum covers all domains of early learning.

- Language and literacy
- Social Studies
- Science
- Mathematics
- The Arts
- Physical Development
- Social and Emotional Development

Assessments

Our early childhood scholars take the following assessments throughout the school year.

- MKAS
- OWL Assessments • Brigance Inventory of Early Development
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

Typical Day in Pre-K

Welcome/Arrival: Children are welcomed and then independently select activities as they arrive in the classroom.

Circle Time: Your child joins with classmates to talk about the day. Students are engaged in writing, language, and mathematical instruction.

Work Time: Children choose from activities in the centers which include dramatic play, table toys, blocks, art, sensory table, library, and computers. Learning is child-centered through play facilitated by the staff.

Clean Up: Your child learns the importance of concluding activities, putting away materials and cooperating with others.

Small Group Instruction: Children receive intentional instruction on targeted objectives in a small group setting. Students are taught language, literacy, and mathematic concepts and skills through a variety of instructional strategies.

Outdoor Learning/Activity Room: Energetic outdoor play provides opportunities for children to develop large muscles, to engage in social interactions, and to experience nature. Children also learn self-management by following rules and safety guidelines.

Music and Movement: Your child will experience music and physical activities in the classroom, the activity room and on the playground. Learning to follow rules and safety guidelines as well as building large motor skills will accompany the fun students enjoy.

Story Time: Teachers read to children in both large and small groups. Reading enhances listening comprehension, stimulates thought-provoking questions and conversation, and develops concepts of print and vocabulary.

Dismissal: Children are encouraged to review the day's events and independently collect their belongings.

Kindergarten Teaching Philosophy

We believe the kindergarten program should be adaptable to each child's needs, interests, and level of development. A variety of activities tailored to individual needs help children grow socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

Our kindergarten program:

- Focuses on oral language development and phonemic awareness as the basis for writing, reading, and thinking.
- Builds on, improves, and increases the knowledge and skills that children bring to school.
- Incorporates active learning through body movement activities, manipulation of materials, and interaction with others.
- Uses ongoing performance assessment to observe, document, and analyze children's learning behavior in the area of language arts, math/science, and fine and gross motor skills.
- Encourages a love of learning.

Children learn, grow, and develop at different rates. The Clarksdale Municipal School District's kindergarten curriculum takes into consideration these differences in young children. We want each student to experience success and build a positive self-concept.



Kindergarten Goals

The goals of the Clarksdale Municipal School District's kindergarten program are as follows:

- To help each child become comfortable in a classroom setting:
- To help each child gain independence, confidence, and self-control:
- To help each child develop a positive self-concept:
- To help each child develop communication skills:
- To promote interaction, cooperation, and understanding among the school, parents, and the community:
- To help each child develop initiative, creativity, independence, and motor coordination through the constructive use of materials:
- To help each child expand their world of people, experiences, and skills:
- To help each child develop trusting relationships:
- To provide each child with an atmosphere favorable for learning and growth

Kindergarten readiness is ...

Children entering kindergarten demonstrate a variety of learning behaviors. Indicators of kindergarten success include the following:

Oral language, reading, and writing

- Says his/her first name
- Follows simple directions
- Answers simple questions
- Recites some nursery rhymes
- Retells a familiar event or story
- Participates in word play
- Identifies colors
- Identifies some letters of the alphabet
- Writes his/her own name
- Discusses a favorite story
- Pretends to “read” a book
- Attempts writing by using scribbling, print-like symbols, or strings of letters

Mathematics

- Identifies some shapes
- Matches objects like socks, shoes
- Notices similarities/differences
- Sorts and classifies objects
- Tries to count to 10
- Touches or points at objects when counting
- Arranges objects from shortest to tallest
- Uses math language like bigger, smaller, tallest, and shortest

Social-emotional, physical

- Makes choices, takes turns
- Uses self-help skills (dressing, toileting, eating)
- Shares with others
- Helps with chores at home
- Begins to demonstrate independence and shows self-confidence
- Tries new things, finishes new tasks
- Hops, jumps, gallops, runs, leaps, climbs, balances
- Throws and catches a ball
- Buttons and zips
- Alternates feet when walking up steps
- Expresses thoughts, feelings

A Day in Kindergarten

A kindergarten day will include a balance of large groups, small groups, and center activities. There will also be many opportunities for movement, active play, and hands-on investigations. The following sample is one way of organizing a kindergarten day. The actual plan will vary according to teaching styles, classroom needs, and special programs. Any schedule must be flexible enough to allow for the “teachable moment”, unplanned events, and time of year. For example, at the start of the year, students will be building community and relationships, as well as stamina for learning.

- Arrival
- Morning Meeting (Whole group); attendance, calendar, weather, greetings, morning message, music and movement, plan for the day
- Language Arts (Whole group); shared reading and introduction of reading/writing skills
- Individual and small group work and centers; children are working at centers independently or in small groups with an adult based on their individual needs.
- Lunch
- Recess
- Math (Whole group); number sense routines, music/movement related to numbers and counting, introduction of new concepts.
- Individual and small group work, and centers, related to math.
- Special subjects such as art, music, gym, library, and special projects. School counselors will also push into classes for social-emotional learning opportunities.
- Closing Circle (Whole group)

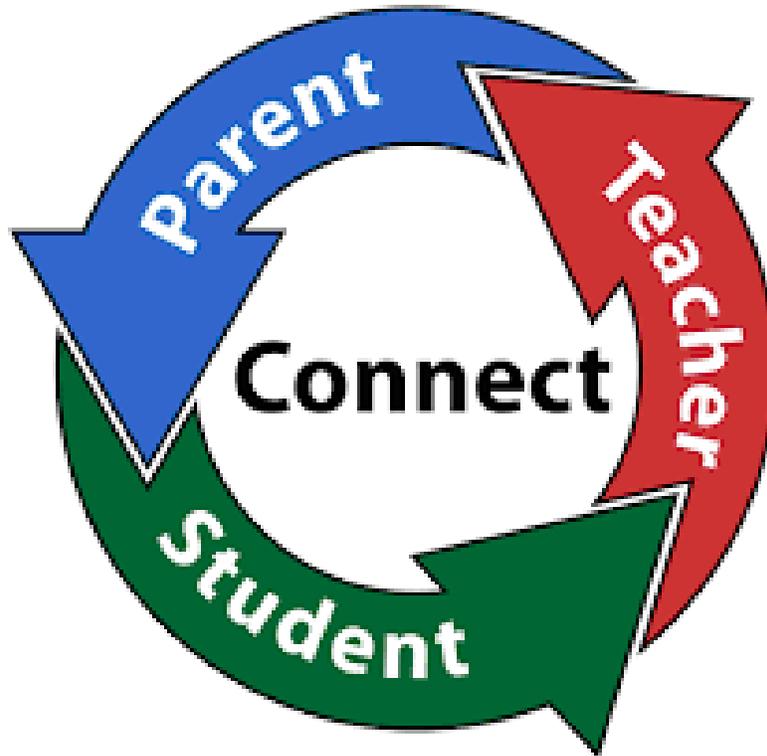


Parent Teacher Conferences

Pre-K and Kindergarten

A minimum of three (3) parent/teacher conferences will be offered to Pre-K families and (2) parent/teacher conferences will be offered to kindergarten families during the school year. During this conference, the CMSD Progress reports will be shared with families.

While sharing the CMSD progress reports with families, teachers will provide information about the child's performance in language/literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, social/emotional development, health and physical development, creative expression, approaches to play and learning, and cognitive processes. Your attendance is strongly encouraged for each of these conferences.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What if my child is not making progress?

If your child is not making progress, his or her teacher will provide more opportunities to learn the skill using different teaching strategies. The teacher may also provide your child more time to practice at his or her current performance level. The teacher will coordinate with families how to best support learning at home.

How do teachers determine how or when students move to the next code level?

When the teacher observes your child apply the skill with less assistance, prompting, or independently, he or she will be moved to the next skill level.

What is the teacher looking to see in advanced development?

The teacher is looking to see that your child can independently apply the skill in various settings and levels of difficulty. The teacher will consistently observe your child exceed knowledge expectations for your child's grade or age group for this skill.



Pre-K and Kindergarten Grading

Family Interpretation Guide for the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms

Mississippi Early Learning Standards are very important in the daily lives of teachers and students. Families should also have knowledge about MS Early Learning Standards to provide learning support in the home and to make well-informed educational decisions regarding their child.

The definition for each code is listed below:

Code 1= Needs Improvement- the student exhibits the desired skill in isolated or rare instances, or with a great deal of support

Code 2= Making Progress- the student exhibits the desired skill more frequently with teacher support

Code 3= Developing As Expected-the student exhibits consistent progress toward the desired skill with little teacher support

Code 4= Advanced Development-the student exhibits mastery of the desired skill with little teacher support

Below, you will find code-level descriptors and code-level performance exemplars for Pre-K and Kindergarten literacy standards.

Sample Grade Level Coding Exemplar

ELA.RF.PK4.1d			
Recognize and name some upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet, especially those in own name.			
Code 1 Needs Improvement	Code 2 Making Progress	Code 3 Developing	Code 4 Advanced Development
Your child exhibits the isolated, rare instances, or needs consistent support from teachers and adults.	Your child is making some steady progress toward the desired skill.	Your child is making consistent progress and requires minimal assistance from teachers and adults.	Your child is ahead of expected developmental knowledge and progress toward the skill.
Code 1 Example	Code 2 Example	Code 3 Example	Code 4 Example
Your child may be able to sing or recite the alphabet, but he or she does not yet recognize letters in isolation.	You child can identify Some letters in his or her name with supports (hints) and prompts (pictures, adult help by making verbal and visual connects).	Your child can independently identify his or her own name in print and distinguish between capital and lowercase letters.	Your child recognizes all letters in isolation. In addition, to his or her own name, your child recognizes the printed names of close friends and relatives.

Safety and Security Information

Pre-K and Kindergarten

Transportation

The Clarksdale Municipal School District provides transportation. The buses also have the appropriate child restraints for each of the student riders. Students must be picked up at the designated bus stops based on their address.

Safety to and from School

Whether your child rides in a car or a bus, be sure that they are aware of the safety rules associated with the type of transportation. Your ongoing communication with your child regarding safety issues reinforces these essential concepts.

Emergency Contacts

Every student must have emergency contacts on file, indicating the names of people who are authorized by the parent(s) to pick up the child. We require a note from you to inform us of any changes to your child's pickup plans, and the individual picking up the student must present valid identification.

Schedule

Pre-K classes meet daily from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Kindergarten classes meet daily from 7:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

Photography

Photos and videos may be taken at school events for use by the school district. The district will use them for district publications. Signed permission forms for publicity must be completed for a student's likeness to be used.

Dismissal

Each Pre-K class is dismissed at 2:00 p.m. daily.

Each Kindergarten class is dismissed at 2:45 p.m. daily.

All students must be picked up on time each day so that teachers can prepare for the following day.

Additional Information

Attendance

Your child must attend class regularly for optimum learning. We request you call your child's school to inform them when your child will be absent from school. An absence will be excused if the school is notified via parent note or telephone call. To ensure that parent(s) have an opportunity to communicate informally with teachers daily about their child's development and learning, we ask that you sign your child upon arriving and sign them out when departing school each day. Parents are welcome to visit their child's classroom at any time the child is present.

Food Services

The Clarksdale Municipal School District participates in the National School Lunch and School breakfast programs. For the 2025-2026 school year all students are eligible to receive free breakfast and lunch under the Community Eligibility Provision.

Birth Certificate & Immunization

All students are required to have an original, certified birth certificate and a completed 121 form on file before being enrolled in a Pre-K and Kindergarten classroom.

Readiness Assessment(MKAS)

The Pre-K and Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will provide parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school. This readiness assessment will also be used to measure how well Pre-K and Kindergarten programs prepare students for the next grade level based upon the Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four- & Five-Year-Old Children.

Uniform Policy Grades Pre-K-12

General Guidelines

No student's appearance should cause a distraction to such an extent that it violates another student's right to an education. All students are expected to observe minimum standards of hygiene, sanitation, and personal appearance. All students are expected to be in uniform each day unless specifically instructed differently by the building principal. The Board of Trustees approved the following recommendations for clothing to be worn in elementary, middle, and high school of the Clarksdale Municipal School District.

1. Uniforms should be color-coordinated clothing.
2. The following regulations will be followed for shirts/tops:
 - A. Shirts/tops must be **light blue, white, or navy blue** (*No Logos, stripes, or emblems)
 - B. Shirts/tops must have a collar.
 - C. Shirts/tops may not be sleeveless.
 - D. Shirts/tops must cover the body and be tucked in throughout the school day.
 - E. No shirt/blouses should be worn over the uniform shirt.
3. The following regulations will be followed for pants/skirts/shorts/skorts/jumpers:
 - A. Pants/skirts/shorts/jumpers may be khaki or navy blue.
 - B. No logos/emblems should be on clothing.
 - C. Pants must be worn at the waistline and should not be worn below or on the buttocks or hip area. Sagging pants will not be tolerated! School officials may use fasteners and strings to assist students in keeping pants at the waistline.
 - D. A belt must be worn if there are belt loops. The belt must be navy, khaki, or black in color.
4. No warm-up pants, sweatpants, or wind pants are allowed.
5. No denim of any color is permitted.
6. Furthermore, the following general regulations apply:
 - A. Headwear should be as follows:
 1. Students are permitted to wear hats during inclement weather provided these hats are removed upon entering the building. No caps, hats or headgear shall be worn inside the building. (**Penalty:** Confiscation).
 2. Students will wear only plain white tee shirts or undershirts beneath their school uniform shirt. (No black, red, or other colored t-shirts should be worn).
 - B. Due to safety concerns, proper shoes must be always worn. Only closed-toed shoes are permitted. Flip-flops are not considered proper shoes or crocs.
 - C. Immodest clothing will not be tolerated. Clothing must not contain holes, torn spots, or frays. **Students should not wear clothing that is too tight or too loose.**
 - D. Skirts and shorts should be of a length that when a student's arms are extended downward by the sides in a natural position and the shorts are at the proper position at the waist, the length of the skirt, shorts, etc. must be as long as the longest fingertip.
 - E. Any student who has a beard or mustache must keep it neatly trimmed.

F. Female students must wear age-appropriate undergarments and the front of the clothing should not be worn so that it becomes immodest.

G. Undergarments should not be visible at any time.

H. No halters or halter dresses may be worn.

I. Hair must be properly groomed.

J. Sunglasses will not be worn in the building by any student.

8. No gang-related clothing or jewelry shall be worn by the student.

9. Absolutely no body piercings will be allowed (i.e., tongue, nose, lip, cheeks, etc.)

Small earrings worn in the ears by young ladies are the only acceptable form of body-piercing. Males are not allowed to wear earrings.

10. All students must use clear backpacks for the 2025–2026 school year. Mesh and solid-colored bags are not allowed.

Any student who violates the uniform policy will be corrected upon entering the school building. If the student cannot correct his/her uniform before entering the school, his/her parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to bring the necessary clothing.

Mississippi Pre-K and Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines

Language and Early Literacy

During these years, children's experiences with communication and literacy begin to form the basis for their later school success. Given adequate opportunities to interact with responsive adults and peers in language and print-rich environments, young children develop vocabulary, extended language skills, and knowledge of the world around them. They develop listening comprehension and phonological awareness; understanding of the everyday functions of print; motivation to read; appreciation for literacy forms, and print awareness and letter knowledge. They learn what books are and how to use them. Understanding the value of literacy as a means of communication, as well as coming to enjoy reading, are accomplishments typical of a future good reader. These language and literacy accomplishments are best achieved through activities that are integrated across different developmental areas: cognitive development, fine and gross motor development, and social and emotional development. It is important to consider native language, augmentative communication, and sensory impairment in accomplishing these guidelines.

Educators should provide opportunities to promote language and literacy learning in children who speak a language other than English. The Mississippi Pre-k and kindergarten curriculum guidelines outline language and literacy accomplishments for four and five-year-olds in their native language. For students whose first language is other than English, the native language serves as the foundation for English language acquisition. Specific guidelines for the language and literacy development of pre-kindergarten children whose home language is not English in an English-only setting is addressed in the guidelines.

Mathematics

Mathematics learning builds on children's curiosity and enthusiasm and challenges children to explore ideas about patterns and relationships, order predictability, logic and meaning. Consequently, quality instruction occurs in environments that are rich in language, encourage children's thinking, and nurture children's explorations and ideas. These ideas include concepts of number patterns, measurement, shape, space, classification, safety, hygiene, and physical activity that contribute to their well-being. Children's experiences with their health and the discovery of ways to improve it enhance their desire and ability to make wise decisions for healthy living in the future.

Personal and Social Development

Students develop personal and social skills that enable them to function well within the social setting of the classroom. Children develop a sense of who they are and their capabilities, and establish positive relationships with others, which enables them to effectively participate in class and community and accomplish meaningful tasks.

Physical Development

Movement is at the center of young children's lives. Students participate in experiences that foster fundamental motor development skills, such as walking and running, which are necessary for participation in games and sports throughout life. They begin to develop gross motor skills that involve throwing, catching, and kicking, and fine motor skills that involve greater precision and accuracy of movement.

Technology Applications

Young children have much to gain from the use of technology. In pre-k and kindergarten, they expand their ability to acquire information, solve problems, and communicate with others. Regular access and exposure to computers and related technology can enhance this learning. Children use engaging, age-appropriate, and challenging software, and technology to extend their knowledge and to enrich their learning of curriculum content and concepts. These technologies serve as important learning tools and are integrated throughout the instructional program.

Children learn the basic functions of the computer and related technologies. They develop techniques for handling and controlling various input devices and become increasingly confident and independent users of age-appropriate software programs.

What Can You Do?

Ways for Parents to Support Learning

- Go to the library
- Read stories daily
- Go to the park or explore your backyard
- Do simple cooking projects with your child
- Give your child opportunities to help you at home
- Play with your child
- Limit TV and video games
- Teach your child to take good care of toys and put them away.
- Encourage good health habits (washing hands with soap, proper use of tissue, brushing teeth, etc)
- Eat healthy foods
- Schedule an appropriate bedtime
- Invite a friend to play
- Display your child's work
- Listen to and talk with your child
- Provide writing materials (crayons, markers, pencils, paper, cards)
- Show your child how you write to create lists and notes
- Encourage exploration of different art media (paint, play-doh, tissue paper, construction paper, glue, scissors)
- Attend parent education opportunities provided at each school



Parent Look Fors in Pre-K and Kindergarten Classes

The Teacher....	
Display	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays a daily schedule in the classroom (may be by a picture) for children. • Displays a lesson plan with the theme and activities for the week. • Has the classroom rules posted • Provides pictures /information regarding emotions and/or managing feelings • Posts children’s artwork throughout the classroom. • References children’s artwork and other materials posted throughout the classroom during conversation or for a lesson/teachable moment. • Makes most, if not all, of the display for children at their eye level.
Teacher Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greets children upon arrival and welcomes them into the classroom. • Provides children with individualized attention throughout the day. • Models appropriate behavior throughout the day. • Helps children problem solve • Focuses on children learning appropriate behaviors, rather than punishment for inappropriate behaviors. • Asks the children questions (open-ended and “how” and “why” questions) throughout the day to promote children’s thinking and discussions • Talks to children with respect, at their eye level, and with a positive tone. • Greets children’s questions with enthusiasm and responds in thoughtful ways. • Engages in frequent conversations throughout the day with children. • Uses questions to prompt children’s self-reflections on their understanding and work. • Consistently explains, re-explains, and

	<p>implements procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives clear directions and expectations, written or orally. Multistep directions are broken down and presented visually. • Works well with other teachers in the classroom and demonstrates collaboration and cooperation
<p style="text-align: center;">Classroom Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranges the classroom into learning centers (examples: art, dramatic play, blocks, writing, science, math, music/movement, library, quiet space). • Has theme/lesson plan-aligned learning materials easily accessible to children through the classroom • Provides a variety of materials for hands-on learning (rather than worksheets). • Creates space that is welcoming to all children in the classroom (examples: has children's names posted in cubbies, display/holds items at children's level, presence of soft spaces). • Designs the space to allow children to independently access materials, activities, personal belongings, and basic hygiene items (e.g., tissues) throughout the day. • Sets up the classroom with order and continuity.
<p style="text-align: center;">Daily Activities/Lessons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has daily activities and materials prepared and ready to use. No time is wasted throughout the day with preparation. • Provides different types of activities throughout the day (active, quiet, whole group, small group and/or individualized) • Uses learning centers to extend concepts taught in large/small groups • Promotes children working together-developing cooperation and friendship skills and also allows children to work independently when they need/want they should be doing • Utilizes hands-on activities (rather than worksheets) as the primary method of teaching and learning

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individualizes teaching to meet different children's needs (examples: asks different types of questions to different children, provides movement activities for some children when together at whole group etc.)• Makes modifications to the lesson as needed (example: While reading a book to the whole group, several children have difficulty participating, so the teacher stops and has the children sing songs and dance instead).• Helps children understand the lesson by connecting to real world applications that are meaningful to the children's own lives.
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