

# DANBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

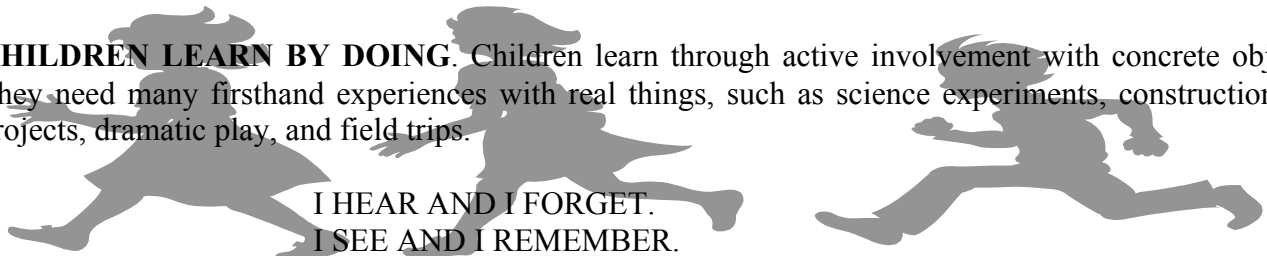
## POSITION PAPER – FEBRUARY 2000

### **THE EDUCATION OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS**

**W**e believe that a **balanced instructional approach** is the most appropriate and effective method to promote learning in young children. A balanced instructional approach recognizes that children enter kindergarten with different background experiences and with different entry levels of cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor development. Further, each child learns at a different rate and through a variety of learning styles. Each of these attributes requires the careful attention of the kindergarten teacher in order to support the continuous development of each child.

**W**e also believe that young children possess a tremendous desire and aptitude for learning. It is essential that educators capitalize upon these qualities by providing appropriate literacy and content readiness activities while developing the foundation for life long learning capabilities. Consequently, the following qualifying beliefs must be addressed in order to meet the educational needs of young children:

- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH PLAY.** Play is what children do best and enjoy the most. For children, play is their work. Play fosters total development and should be integrated into many activities with careful teacher management.
- **CHILDREN LEARN BY DOING.** Children learn through active involvement with concrete objects. They need many firsthand experiences with real things, such as science experiments, construction, art projects, dramatic play, and field trips.



I HEAR AND I FORGET.  
I SEE AND I REMEMBER.  
I DO AND I UNDERSTAND.

*Chinese Proverb*

- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH THEIR SENSES.** Sensory learning emphasizes the need for a variety of media and materials to stimulate children's senses.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH LANGUAGE.** Children need to talk about their experiences and to verbalize what they are thinking. Teachers can foster language by describing what they are doing, labeling objects, clarifying children's thoughts, and asking open-ended questions.
- **CHILDREN LEARN BY BEING MOTIVATED.** Motivation is a key ingredient to learning. Interesting materials and a stimulating environment will spark children's curiosity and inspire them to learn.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH AUTHENTIC PRAISE, FEEDBACK, AND POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT.** "Nothing succeeds like success." Positive experiences and praise encourage children to learn more while building their confidence.
- **CHILDREN LEARN BEST WHEN PARENTS ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION.** Active parent involvement and meaningful home-school partnerships between educators and parents are critical in supporting the development of the whole child.

- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH MODELING.** Children learn by observing others and then imitating what they see and hear. Children also imitate values and attitudes that they see in parents, teachers, and peers.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH REPETITION.** Children build knowledge through repetition and through accumulated experience. Content should include Language Arts, Reading Readiness, Math Readiness, Science, Social Studies, Computers, Art, Music, Media and Physical Education.
- **CHILDREN LEARN BY EXPERIMENTING.** Children need the freedom to experiment, explore, try things out, and to make choices. Since they learn through trial and error, accept their mistakes and offer feedback and support.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH EXPOSURE.** Children learn more in the early years than any other period. They need to be stimulated with a wide variety of materials, activities, and content.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH INTERACTING WITH FRIENDS.** It is amazing how much children learn through talking, watching, and playing with their friends, siblings, and others. Peer teaching/cooperative learning are powerful learning tools.
- **CHILDREN LEARN IN A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT.** Children need to feel loved, safe, and secure in order to learn. An atmosphere of warmth and acceptance is much more conducive than one that is competitive or threatening.
- **CHILDREN LEARN THROUGH WHOLENESS.** Learning is not isolated, but should be connected and integrated in all areas of the curriculum. Learning should also focus on the whole child by meeting their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.

**W**hen the above guidelines are followed, children will become independent learners who are excited about school and are enthusiastic about learning. They will have a strong foundation, confidence in their abilities, and lifelong skills that will help them continue to learn.

### **CLASSROOM PRACTICES**

- ◆ Well designed and planned classroom centers provide ideal situations for children to learn through play. The teacher plays an active role in managing, introducing, monitoring/assessing, planning for various levels and having clear objectives to reinforce curriculum. Examples of centers are: math, blocks, dramatic play, science, library, listening, sensory (sand, water), music, etc. Recess, free and snack time also offer obvious opportunities for children to play and interact.
- ◆ Young children need to be provided with numerous opportunities for active involvement. These opportunities might include: field trips, cooking, theme based projects, center activities, etc. Activities should be concrete, relate to life experiences and build on what children already know and include small group, whole group and individual instruction.

- ◆ In a kindergarten classroom there is a need and importance for a wide variety of materials, equipment and activities. The kindergarten class should have: tape recorders, headsets, paint, brushes, clay, sand and water, easels, markers, colored pencils, puppets, puppets stage, a variety of books (i.e. big, picture and one sentence books), computers, manipulatives, puzzles, magnetic letters, dry erase boards and markers, overhead projector, workshop and house supplies, dress-up costumes, cooking and science materials, etc. In order to develop gross motor skills strategies should include activities on the Playscape, teaming with the physical education teacher, and classroom games involving total body movement.
- ◆ Story time, chants, circle time, morning messages, journal writing, interactive writing, center time, singing, acting out stories, snack time, sharing and play provide opportunities for children to develop language/reading readiness skills. Activities should be offered in a variety of whole group, small group and individually.
- ◆ Kindergarten teachers are positive role models and present lessons enthusiastically, understanding children's backgrounds, interests and learning styles.
- ◆ When young children observe positive and genuine communication between their parents and teachers, they feel that their two worlds are connected. Ways to connect these two worlds may include, weekly/monthly newsletters, parents' bulletin board, active parent involvement, and the "Bridge" Project.
- ◆ The kindergarten teacher models oral and written language structure, appropriate play, role playing, operation of centers, manners and respect for others.
- ◆ Since children learn through repetition, the teacher provides children with numerous opportunities to experiment and explore. Children are encouraged to listen to stories more than once. Teachers share favorite class poems, stories and songs numerous times.
- ◆ A kindergarten class offers developmentally appropriate activities in whole group, small group and individual time which cover curriculum content. There is a need for balance of the above. Teachers need to zero in on what the child needs and his/her level of readiness. In a balanced day you might find:
  - Whole Group: Directed lessons - A total group follow up activity may occur.
  - Small Group: Teacher may work with a small group while other students work in centers to reinforce content learning.
  - Individual: Teacher may review/practice skills with individual student.
- ◆ The teacher monitors centers. Small group projects are planned to promote cooperative learning. The classroom is not quiet – children are conversing.
- ◆ The teacher recognizes and respects diversity and builds upon individual strengths. The teacher understands that children are at various levels and will progress at different rates.
- ◆ A kindergarten day is integrated. Themes are used. Themes help children learn about the world around them. Themes enable children to acquire information and concepts through meaningful activities focusing on curriculum areas.