

Theory and Creative Curriculum

Maslow's Theory of Basic Needs & Learning

A child's basic needs must be met before they are able to learn.

- Physiological needs such as hunger and thirst; a hungry child has difficulty focusing on learning
- Being safe and free from danger; children who know that no harm will come to them are more likely to reach out to others and explore their environment
- Belongingness is the sense of being comfortable with and connected to others; which promote learning
- Esteem is self respect and respect from others; which emerges from daily experiences that give children opportunity to discover that they are capable of learning

First priority of Creative Curriculum is to meet the basic needs of the children; inside the classroom the teacher creates an atmosphere where children are safe, feel emotionally secure and have a sense of belonging.

Erickson's Theory Emotion & Learning

Children develop through stages involving issues that must be resolved for healthy development.

- Infancy – **trust versus mistrust**; learning that they will be safe, and that adults will be responsive to their needs.
 - Creative Curriculum helps teachers know and develop positive relationships with each child and follow a consistent schedule
- Ages 1 -3 – **autonomy versus shame and doubt**; sense of personal power that is built on a foundation of trust
 - Creative Curriculum helps teachers help children become autonomous by providing structure while allow them to regulate their own behavior
 - Setting up an environment where children can find and return materials on their own; provide appropriate play materials that support and challenge their abilities; help children express their feelings and resolve conflict in constructive ways; encourage children to see tasks through to completion
- Ages 3 – 5 – **initiative versus guilt**; being able to respond positively to challenges and take on responsibility
 - Creative Curriculum helps teachers create a classroom that encourages experimentation, exploration and pursuit of individual interests

Learning & the Brain

- Learning is a combination of heredity (nature) and environment (nurture)
 - Rich experiences benefit children in early child hood; Creative Curriculum teachers have a profound influence on all children's learning – synapses are formed
- The brain grows and changes as a result of learning and experiencing
 - Creative Curriculum teachers provide many experiences; connections are formed
- For a connection to be permanent the learning experience needs to be reinforced over and over; children need many different opportunities to provide new skills
 - Creative Curriculum teachers allow children to explore concepts over time
- Stress can destroy brain cells and make learning more difficult; secure relationships with family members and teachers are essential for a child to learn

- How teachers treat children is as important to learning as what they teach
- A well-balanced diet, sufficient sleep and plenty of exercise support healthy brain development
- During the early years when the brain is at its peak for learning, children are the most receptive to learning emotional control, forming attachments to others and acquiring language skills
 - Creative Curriculum teachers focus on the development of social and language skills in preschool classrooms

Brain research has found physical evidence to support Maslow and Ericson's theories of learning; the wiring in a child's brain is positively affected when they are healthy and well fed, feel safe from threat, and have nurturing, stable relationships.

Piaget's Theory of Logical Thinking & Reasoning

Logical thinking develops in stages and children develop reasoning by manipulating materials; engaging actively in their environment, making new discoveries and modifying their earlier way of thinking.

- Sensorimotor (0-2); babies learn by reacting to what they experience through their senses
- Preoperational (preschool age); concentration on properties of materials and seeing the world from their own point of view
 - Creative Curriculum structures the environment and activities based on the children's cognitive development; varying complexity and level of choices, etc and teachers help children learn what they can manage. Teachers give children many opportunities to work with concrete objects and encourage them to interact with others and learn about other perspectives.

Vygotsky's Theory of Social Interaction & Learning

- Children grow cognitively by interacting with adults and peers
 - Verbal directions, physical assistance and probing questioning by teachers help children improve skills and acquire knowledge. Working with peers allows children to respond to someone else's examples, questions and actions.
 - Creative Curriculum is a community – a place where learning takes place through positive relationships. Children are taught the skills they need for making friends, solving problems and sharing.

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

- Children are intelligent in many different ways and have the capacity to develop all the intelligences if given encouragement, enrichment and support.
 - Linguistic/verbal; logical/mathematical; musical/rhythmic; spatial/visual; bodily/kinesthetic; interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist
 - Creative Curriculum applies this theory by helping teachers provide opportunities for each child to pursue their own talents and demonstrate areas of strength
 - Interest areas allow children to use a variety of intelligences
 - Learning social skills is just as important as learning concepts
 - Physical activity is key

Smilansky's Theory of Children Play & Learning

- Functional Play – use senses and muscles to experiment with materials
 - Creative Curriculum shows teachers how to create an environment that allows for functional play experiences by providing new materials to allow children to learn about the world
- Constructive Play – learning different uses of materials
 - Creative Curriculum shows teachers how to validate and reinforce constructive play by prompting children to extend their ideas and interact with peers so they learn from play
- Pretend Play – pretending to be someone else while using real or pretend object to play out the role
 - Creative Curriculum teaches how to create an environment to support and extend pretend play
- Games with Rules – table and physical games that require children to control the physical and verbal behavior to conform to a structure of pre-set rules
 - Creative Curriculum suggests outdoor games, board and card games, and allowing children to make up their own rules. The focus is on playing for fun, not competition.

Learning and Resiliency

Children who develop well despite the burden of hardships – resilient children.

Negative effects of hardship can be alleviated and children can develop skills to deal with adversity.

- Teachers can make the difference for children threatened by harmful conditions; all children can be reached by adults who protect their normal development.

To develop resilience children need:

- To spend time in a safe, supportive and stimulating environment
- To have access to caring, supportive adults who believe in them
- To have opportunities to develop self-control
- To get a sense of their own competence
- To be exposed to teaching strategies that help them become successful learners

Creative Curriculum fosters resilience by showing teachers how to structure the classroom and have positive, respectful interactions with children.

“You can make a difference even if you can not change the unfortunate circumstances that children deal with”