

## **Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers: The Curriculum = The Learning Environment for Infants and Toddlers**

During the child's first three years of life, more rapid brain development takes place than at any other time of life. Children discover who they are, how others respond to them, and how they respond to others. And, they begin to develop trust. Children learn to relate to others and express feelings and their brains begin patterns for emotional, social, spiritual, physical and cognitive development. Infants and toddlers hear of Jesus' love for them and begin to experience His love through their adult caregivers' words and actions.

A Christ-centered curriculum for infants and toddlers is a Christ-centered environment in which children are cared for and nurtured.

### **Goals of a Christ-centered curriculum infant/toddler curriculum include:**

- Introduce children to Jesus' love and care.
- Partner with parents in the child's faith development.
- Teach all children about God's love, Jesus' birth, death, resurrection and forgiveness.
- Meet developmental needs of infants and toddlers through primary caregivers, small groups and low adult/child ratios.
- Celebrate God's creation through the senses.
- Serve infants/toddlers and their families.
- Respect each family's culture and heritage.
- Provide a variety of discovery activities for children to learn by being actively involved.
- Help infants develop trust while helping toddlers move toward independence.
- Respect and interact with each child of God in caring ways – verbally and nonverbally.
- Help each child build a solid and strong foundation of faith and life experiences with which young children can continue to grow and develop.
- Provide daily routine activities for each individual infant and toddler during playtime, eating time, diapering/toileting time and sleep time.

**"The 10 things That Every Child Needs."** (Taken from The McCormick Tribune Foundation)

These 10 qualities are provided throughout the day in the curriculum for infants/toddlers.

#### **1. Interaction with significant adults**

- Establish a strong bond with children.
- Provide warm and consistent care enabling children to learn and develop trust.

#### **2. Touch**

- Nurturing touch helps develop confidence, trust and security in infants/toddlers.

#### **3. Stable relationships**

- The care of a loving, consistent adult is crucial for trust to develop in infants/toddlers.

- Infants/toddlers needs to feel secure in the knowledge that their physical and emotional needs are going to be met.
- 4. Safe and healthy environment**
    - All of the places where children play should be safe and free of hazards. Conduct a daily safety check.
    - Clean and sanitize toys, tables, etc. daily.
  - 5. Self-esteem**
    - Provide an environment that gives children the message that Jesus loves them and you do too.
    - Provide positive behavior guidance.
    - Reinforce daily that infants/toddlers are lovable and capable children of God.
    - Encourage independence, but be near to lend support and guidance.
  - 6. Quality care**
    - Staff programs with qualified, trained and committed adults who will interact positively with the children entrusted to them.
  - 7. Communication**
    - Talk to the children early and often
      - Repeat songs, stories and nursery rhymes
      - Talk to them about what is happening and what will come next (give running commentaries).
  - 8. Play**
    - Make play the basis for the early childhood education program.
    - Provide children with various experiences
      - Let them experience many different sensory materials
      - Model play – act playfully; develop an attitude of playfulness
      - Allow for exploration
      - Let children’s interests and abilities guide play
  - 9. Music**
    - Sing and move every day.
    - Play a variety of music.
    - Dance and pantomime.
    - Create music – let children experiment with music.
  - 10. Reading**
    - Build an interest in reading and books.
    - Read to infants/toddlers several times a day.
    - Read to children one-on-one and conduct group reading times.

### **Learning Centers and Materials**

- **Worship Center:** Small table with cross, toddler Bible, poster of Jesus and children, unbreakable container of flowers, Bible storybooks with colorful illustrations

- **Reading Center:** Board books, photo albums with family photos, book display shelves with covers facing forward, carpet (carpet squares), small rocking chair, child-size couches/chairs
- **Dramatic Play (House Area):** Child-size sink, stove, table, chairs; small baby crib; doll stroller; dress-up clothes; plastic food from a variety of cultures; plastic dishes and cooking equipment; baby dolls of various ethnic groups; baby bottles; baby clothes; play telephone; empty food containers.
- **Sensory Center:** Plastic tubs or sand/water table; scoops, shovels, clear plastic bottles, graduated containers, strainers, etc.
- **Table Toy Center:** Wooden puzzles with knobs, large beads for stringing. large pegs and pegboard, graduated towers, etc.
- **Block Center (Building Area):** Duplo blocks, Duplo people of varying ethnic backgrounds, large animals and dinosaurs, large soft blocks, wooden or plastic cars and trucks, large plastic farm animals and zoo animals
- **Art Center:** (Note -- Use materials with adult supervision.) Washable crayons and markers, colored pencils, paper, paint, smocks, playdough, stickers, etc.

#### **Other**

- Avoid over-stimulation (can be determined by gauging children's moods)
- Change the environment occasionally, but keep familiar "landmarks"