

Brain research has found physical evidence to support what Maslow, Erikson, and other theorists have taught us. It shows that the wiring in children's brain development is positively affected when they are healthy and well fed; feel safe from threats; and have nurturing, stable relationships. Because of this research, *The Creative Curriculum* emphasizes the primary role that teachers play.

| Major Ideas | <i>The Creative Curriculum</i> |
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| <p>Jean Piaget</p> <p>Children's logical thinking develops in stages. They need many opportunities to explore the world around them in order to refine their understandings about how things work. Infants learn by reacting to what they experience through their senses and physical activity. Toddlers and twos are egocentric (see things from their point of view) and overgeneralize their limited experiences.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide safe opportunities for infants to explore their environment through play. • Create a system for collecting and sanitizing mouthed toys and materials, because infants use all of their senses to explore. • Provide opportunities for toddlers and twos to make choices. • Schedule uninterrupted periods of time for children to play and explore their environment. • Ask open-ended questions to encourage children's thinking. |
| <p>Lev Vygotsky</p> <p>Interactions with teachers and peers are an important part of children's cognitive development. Teachers scaffold children's learning by offering assistance and giving supporting information. Teachers must observe children closely to understand how to support their learning.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe children carefully. • Organize a system for recording observation notes and documenting children's development. • Use information from your observations to plan routines and experiences that encourage children's development and learning. • Encourage social interaction between children with varying skill levels so that they can learn from one another. • Offer assistance to children as needed. |
| <p>Learning and the Brain</p> <p>Knowledge of young children's cognitive development has grown with the newer understanding of how the brain develops. Brain development is affected by learning and experiences, which need to be repeated. Emotions, physical health, nutrition, and movement affect learning. There are sensitive periods when the brain is at its peak for certain kinds of learning, but the brain remains open to experiences. Early and sustained stress affects brain development negatively.¹²</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide many and varied experiences for children. • Allow children time to practice new skills. • Develop positive relationships with each child. • Create a safe environment where children can explore confidently and learn. • Provide many rich language experiences throughout the day, by describing what is happening, asking questions, singing, and reading. • Offer continuity of care and primary caregiving. |

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