

Major Ideas	<i>The Creative Curriculum</i>
<p>Abraham Maslow Needs that involve physiology, safety, belonging, and esteem must be met in order for children to be able to build relationships and learn.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an environment in which children are safe, feel emotionally secure, and have a sense of belonging. • Provide responsive caregiving to meet the individual needs of children.
<p>T. Berry Brazelton and Stanley Greenspan Seven needs must be met in order for children to develop and learn. They underlie the principles of developmentally appropriate practice, particularly the important role that families, teachers, and communities play in children’s lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and maintain nurturing relationships with children. • Provide safe, developmentally appropriate learning experiences. • Individualize schedules, routines, and experiences to meet each child’s needs. • Create partnerships with families to support children’s development and learning. • Set limits and guide learning in ways that reflect realistic expectations for children’s behavior.

Milestone 5: Creating emotional ideas—During this stage, children use pretend play to explore their feelings and make sense of their world. When you help children express their feelings through words and gestures, you promote their emotional development. If children’s emotions make you uncomfortable, you may find yourself stopping play that includes anger and aggression. Rather than limiting children’s exploration of these emotions, *The Creative Curriculum* encourages you to acknowledge their feelings and model or suggest an appropriate way to express them.

Milestone 6: Emotional thinking—By this milestone, children link ideas and begin to deal with the world logically. For example, rather than simply hugging a doll, a child might explain that the doll is sad because she fell down and hurt her knee. They begin to connect ideas that pertain to “me” and “not me” and to distinguish reality from fantasy. *The Creative Curriculum* explains how to help toddlers and twos connect their ideas by asking them about their opinions and by extending their play. You also help them realize that actions have consequences and that the present has implications for the future.

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<p>Erik Erikson</p> <p>Social and emotional learning is a lifelong process that begins at birth. When adults are responsive to children’s needs, children resolve the tension between trust and mistrust, and between autonomy and shame.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain a trusting relationship with each child. • Implement nurturing, trust-building routines. • Provide responsive caregiving to meet the individual needs of children. • Provide learning experiences that help children feel competent. • Offer children appropriate choices and challenges.
<p>Stanley Greenspan</p> <p>Six emotional milestones mark the emotional development of very young children. Children develop an understanding of themselves and the world through relationships and emotions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign primary caregivers to infants and toddlers, to help build trusting, loving relationships. • Talk with children, even before they understand anything you are saying. • Respond to children’s communication attempts. • Help children express their emotions appropriately. • Provide many opportunities for pretend play.

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<p>Attachment</p> <p>When children's needs are met consistently in a nurturing way by a trusted adult and when they have many positive interactions with that adult, children learn that they are important and that they can count on others. When they develop a secure attachment with one or more caregivers, children feel more confident about exploring the world around them and developing relationships with others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a primary teacher to each child. • Provide responsive, loving care that meets the individual needs of children. • Use nurturing routines (diaper changing, eating and mealtime, hellos and good-byes, sleeping, and getting dressed) to develop and maintain a trusting relationship with each child. • Respond appropriately to children's communication attempts.
<p>Resilience</p> <p>When young children develop close, trusting relationships with the important adults in their lives, the most basic foundation for the further development of resiliency is laid.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain a trusting relationship with each child. • Teach language for the expression of feelings. • Offer appropriate levels of support to help children develop self-control. • Provide opportunities for children to practice their new skills.

To be able to scaffold children's learning, Vygotsky, like Piaget, taught that teachers need to be expert observers of children. By interacting with children, asking questions, and thinking carefully about children's development, teachers can determine each child's developmental level and consider ways to extend children's learning.

The Creative Curriculum is grounded in Vygotsky's theory that social interaction is key to children's learning. Your primary role is to establish and maintain trusting relationships with children by being responsive to their individual needs. Learning takes place through positive relationships between and among children and adults. Planning and teaching is based on observing and documenting what children do and say. In Vygotsky's terms, you need to determine each child's ZPD. Then you can provide individualized experiences for children that are challenging enough to help them move to a higher level of learning but not so challenging as to frustrate them.

Brain Research

Brain research has improved our understanding of how and when children learn best. Experimental studies of animals and recent innovations in medical technology have led to many new insights. Here are some of the elements of brain research that inform *The Creative Curriculum*.

What We Know From Brain Research	Implications for Teachers
Learning is not a matter of nature versus nurture; it is both. We used to think that heredity (a person's inborn characteristics) is more important than environment (what he or she is exposed to) in determining how well a person learns. In fact, both play a major role.	The ability to learn is not as fixed as we once thought. All children benefit from rich experiences and interactions in early childhood. Teachers can have a profound influence on all children's learning and development.
The human brain is affected by experiences. Children's learning changes the physical structure of their brains.	Every appropriate sensorimotor experience that teachers provide helps children build brain connections.
Learning needs to be reinforced again and again. For a brain connection to become permanent, it must be used repeatedly. Connections that are not used eventually disappear.	Children need many different opportunities to practice new skills. Rather than constantly rotating materials and interrupting children's repetitive play (such as dropping a block off a table and picking it up again and again), teachers give children time to practice new skills.
In order to learn, children need to feel safe and confident. Stress, on the other hand, can trigger chemical changes that begin in the brain and affect many processes in the body. The changes probably affect attention, memory, planning, and behavioral control.	Secure relationships with family members, teachers, and other significant people in a child's life are essential to learning. <i>Creative Curriculum</i> teachers make it their first priority to develop trusting, nurturing relationships with the children in their care.

The Foundation: Theory and Research

What We Know From Brain Research	Implications for Teachers
<p>◀ Nutrition, health, and physical activity affect learning. Movement stimulates connections in the brain. A well-balanced diet, sufficient sleep, and plenty of exercise support healthy brain growth.</p>	<p>Daily exercise and time outdoors are essential for health and well-being, even for young infants. Many programs also provide health screening, as well as meals and snacks.</p>
<p>Evidence shows that visual impairments, auditory deficits, and perceptual-motor delays have serious negative effects on children's developing nervous systems.</p> <p>There might also be sensitive periods when the brain is more receptive to certain types of learning (including emotional control, social attachment, and language), but questions about the brain areas involved in such learning are still being explored. It appears that the brain remains open to experiences, so interventions are important.¹¹</p>	<p>Teachers focus on the skills that provide a foundation for all future learning and offer corrective efforts when children have disabilities. The development of self-regulation, skills for forming relationships with others, strategies for solving problems, language, and music should be important aspects of the curriculum.</p>
<p>During the early years, the brain is more receptive to phonology, learning the individual sounds that make up languages.</p>	<p>Teachers support children's phonological development and language acquisition by talking, singing, reading, and playing with the sounds of words. Dual language learners are supported in learning their home languages as well as the primary language spoken in the program.</p>



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.

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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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