



parent Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum Booklet

Education Bureau
Curriculum Development Institute
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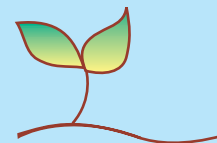
A Word to Parents

The maxim says, “It takes much longer to educate a person than to grow a tree”. To enable the growth of trees, we have to make sure that the seeds fall on the right soil, while elements like water, sunlight and air should also be available. Although it takes a long time to educate an individual, it is, however, a remarkably meaningful mission of mankind.

A child needs to experience affection, care and protection for his/her development. As the nurturers of children, parents have to clearly understand that children’s growth and learning are gradual processes. We have to educate children with reference to their traits and characteristics without giving them undue pressure.

Parents usually pay particular attention to children’s academic achievements. “Academic achievements” at the pre-primary stage embrace both “balanced development” and “whole person education”. It is necessary to bear in mind that children should be allowed to learn in tune with their abilities and needs. Children generally get to know the things around them by their own senses and through play. “Knowledge, skills and attitudes” are all important in laying a solid foundation for “life-long learning and whole person development”.

In the “Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum” (the Guide) issued by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) to all pre-primary institutions in Hong Kong in June 2006, recommendations on curriculum planning, learning and teaching, assessment, etc. were provided to help enhance the quality of pre-primary education. The purpose of this “Parent Booklet” is to highlight the key messages of the Guide with a view to facilitating parents’ understanding of the pre-primary education curriculum, so that they will know how to co-operate with the school in educating their children and helping them grow happily and healthily at this important developmental stage.





What is pre-primary education?

- Pre-primary education (or early childhood education) refers to the stage of education before primary school for children, which lays an important foundation for life-long learning and whole person development. It articulates with primary, secondary and tertiary education to form an entire education system.
- The core value of early childhood education lies in “child-centredness”. In designing an appropriate pre-primary education curriculum, we have taken into careful consideration children’s characteristics and developmental needs. A diversified learning environment that provides sufficient learning opportunities will facilitate children to develop their different potentials. Through play as well as stimulating, interesting and pleasurable activities, children can learn in a pleasurable and relaxed manner.



How do children learn?

- Learning through sensory stimulation - to enhance children's learning by arousing their curiosity and interest through sensory activities that engage them in making use of the five senses to observe, listen, explore, think and imagine
- Learning by doing - to get children actively involved in their learning processes
- Learning through play - to develop their potentials through meaningful, pleasurable and inspiring learning experiences
- A sense of achievement - to provide continual encouragement, support and positive feedback that reinforce further learning and foster self-motivation





In what ways do teachers and the school environment facilitate learning?

- Children are curious about the surrounding environment. A safe and comfortable, pleasurable and invigorating environment is necessary to stimulate them to learn in an active manner.
- Teachers set themselves as examples and serve as language and behaviour models for children. They care about children's physical and mental health as well as habits to promote their learning and growth. As children learn through their life experience and sensory stimulation, teachers can design interesting activities to create a pleasurable atmosphere to enrich children's learning experience. A variety of activities and play which take children's physical ability, intellectual ability, creativity and thinking ability into consideration can be developed. Through group activities and sharing of work, children learn how to cooperate with others, accept and appreciate each other, and establish positive values as well as good social skills.



What should be learnt in the pre-primary education stage?

- A quality pre-primary curriculum should be comprehensive and well-balanced to foster children's holistic development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics aspects. It is not necessary to place great emphasis on reading, writing and numeracy.



Developmental Objectives for Young Children



1

Physical Development

- To cultivate in children good habits, self-care ability and a healthy life-style;
- To develop children's sensory perception and abilities of concentration and observation; and
- To facilitate children's physical activities and enhance their ability of coordination.

2

Cognitive and Language Development

- To arouse and satisfy the curiosity of children, and help them understand the things and people around them;
- To develop children's simple logical concepts in mathematical literacy, so as to help them analyze and solve problems; and
- To develop children's abilities in language and thinking.



Child-centred

3

Affective and Social Development

- To allow children to understand their emotions and express their feelings;
- To help children build up self-esteem, self-confidence, a sense of achievement, and an optimistic attitude towards life;
- To enrich children's life experiences, develop their communication skills and foster their positive attitudes towards people; and
- To cultivate children's care for society, awareness with respect to environmental protection, recognition of their national identities, and respect for different cultures.

4

Aesthetic Development

- To allow children to explore different art media in their living environment;
- To enrich children's sensory experiences and encourage them to express their feelings;
- To stimulate children's creative and imaginative powers, and encourage them to enjoy participating in creative works; and
- To foster children's interests in life by guiding them to appreciate the surrounding environment.

The above-mentioned developmental objectives provide general directions for pre-primary curriculum development. These objectives can be achieved through integrated learning activities across the following six learning areas:

1 Physical Fitness and Health



- Appropriate training on the co-ordination of the body and sensory functions plays an important role in children's learning, because it can effectively develop their concentration and observation abilities, and help enhance their self-confidence.
- Strong physical fitness and good habits are the foundation of children's healthy growth.



2 Language



- During early childhood, developing proficiency in the mother-tongue is of primary importance.
- Language is a key to knowledge acquisition. There is a close relationship between “language ability in the mother-tongue” and “thinking”. Children can learn and think effectively if they are proficient in language communication.
- Language learning (both mother-tongue and English) should be facilitated naturally and based on real-life experience. Children can learn through pleasurable activities such as listening to stories, singing nursery rhymes and participating in interactive games.
- Children acquire listening and speaking abilities before they learn how to read and write.



- Children should not be forced to write with pencils/pens if they are not yet ready. According to the report on a study of Chinese handwriting at the kindergarten level endorsed by the CDC, teachers should foster the development of pre-writing related skills such as fine motor skills, eye-hand co-ordination and concepts of orientation through a variety of play activities.

3 Early Mathematics

- The everyday environment and life experiences of children hold the key to the development of mathematical concepts and cognitive ability. Children's cognitive ability and application of simple preliminary mathematical concepts will be better developed through a wide range of activities such as playing, experimenting with objects and everyday life experiences. The focuses of learning activities include: counting, sequencing, sorting and comparing; learning to identify the properties of objects such as their colour, size, weight, shape; and establishing the concepts of time and space.



4 Science and Technology



- Natural phenomena and objects, coupled with modern inventions such as television, video recorders, computers and Octopus cards, which children encounter and use, are all fascinating teaching materials of science. Information technology (IT) products are also applications of science in their everyday life. Such phenomena and products are excellent science topics for children, who are curious by nature. Through observation, searching, exploration, questioning and verification, children can experience the joy of science exploration, and understand the close relationship between science, technology and living.



5 Self and Society



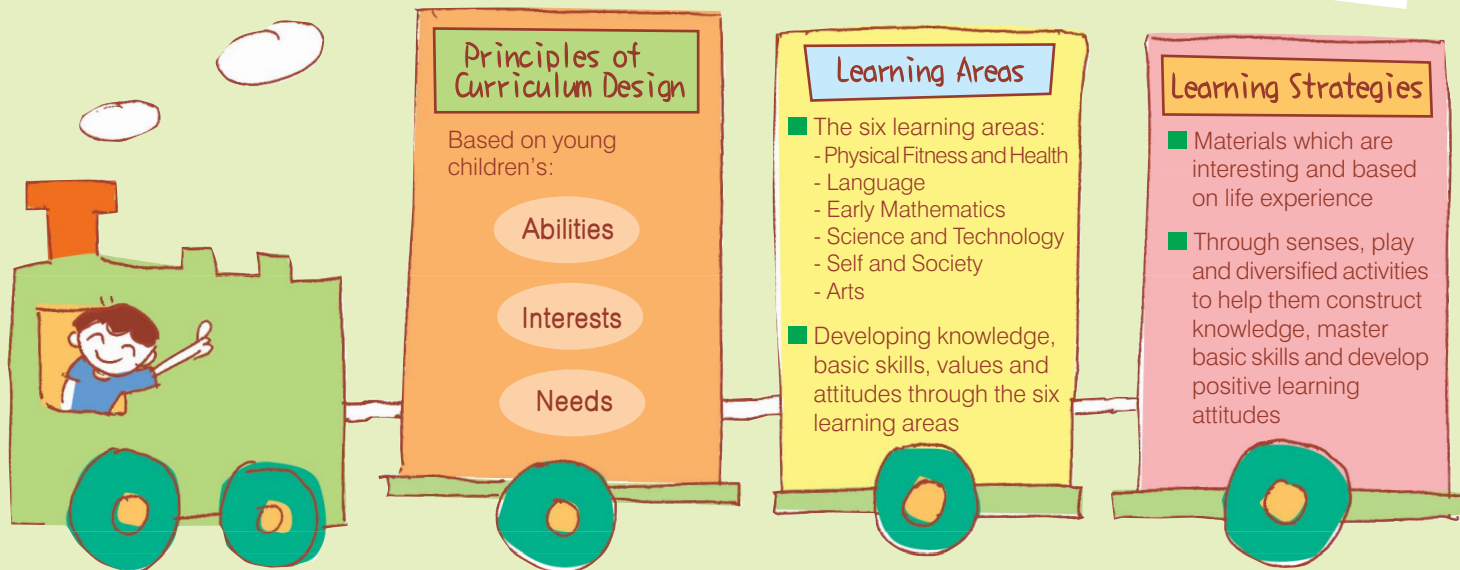
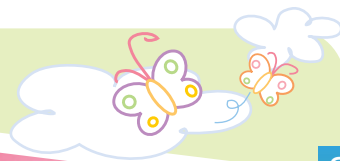
- During the growing process, children need guidance to understand the value of individuals and appropriate attitudes towards interpersonal relationships. Through participating in group activities, children gain experience that enables them to understand the value of their existence, and learn about interpersonal and communication skills.



6 Arts



- Arts activities that extend children's sensory experiences can help them explore and perceive the world through different media. Diversified arts activities such as music, drama, dance and visual arts, can cultivate children's aesthetic sensitivity, imagination and creativity. Through arts, children can express their emotions and feelings, and appreciate different things.





What are the roles and responsibilities of parents?

“Parents are children’s first teachers”

“Parents’ knowledge of early childhood education, expectations of children and parenting style may have a direct or indirect influence on children’s growth.”

Understanding children’s development and ability

- Children’s development is a gradual process. Parents should pay attention to the growing process of children and appreciate that growth rates of individual children are different. Children may have different abilities and varying performance in different aspects.
- Parents may get a clearer picture of their children’s developmental pace through daily parent-child interaction and observation. They should accept their children’s limited abilities, appreciate and encourage their achievement.
- Parents tend to put much emphasis on their children’s development in reading, writing and numeracy. However, children should not be forced to write with pencils/pens if their fine motor skills are not yet fully developed. Nor should children be engaged in repetitive drilling when learning preliminary mathematical concepts for fear that it might weaken their interest in learning mathematics and provoke resistance to learning in general.



- For further information on the major developmental characteristics of children in physical, intellectual, language, social and emotional aspects, parents may refer to the “Developmental Characteristics of Children from 2 to 6 Years Old” in Appendix 1 or download its full version from the EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk/kg_curriculum_guide).

Respect children’s right to learn and tap their full potentials

- As there are individual differences in children’s learning performance, parents should not compare their children with others excessively. Sometimes, children may have difficulties in their learning but these may only be temporary. There is no need for parents to be over anxious.
- Children have different needs of varying degrees at each stage of growth. Thus, the growing process of children and the developmental characteristics of different ages have to be considered in selecting learning contents of the appropriate level for children.
- Parents should have reasonable expectation towards their children as they have different characters, intellectual ability, learning ability, interests and potentials, etc. More importantly, parents should pay attention to their children’s mental and physical health and give them appropriate and sufficient room for development.
- To facilitate parents’ understanding of children’s special development needs, “Children’s Behaviours that Require Concern” is set out at Appendix 2 for parents’ reference. Early identification and intervention in respect of children’s needs, as well as communication with teachers and experts will render effective support to children.





How can parents help in children's development?

Knowledge and happiness acquired from concrete and real objects are far more profound than that acquired from abstract learning.

- Talk with children and answer their questions; listen to them, try to understand what they think and how they feel with patience, and guide them to express themselves.
- Visit the library and engage in parent-child paired reading frequently to cultivate the habit of reading.
- Sing nursery rhymes, recite folk rhymes and read simple riddles with children to stimulate creativity and enhance attention, and help them appreciate the Chinese culture.
- Let children listen to music and take part in appropriate music activities to nurture their temperament.
- Encourage children to observe, draw and engage in creative composing for better developed power of understanding and appreciation.
- Go on visits and trips with children. Let them meet different people and experience different things to enrich their life experiences.



- Experience nature with children. Personal observation and experiential learning are far better than teaching packages and supplementary exercises in the market.
- Pay attention to children's diet, nutrition and daily routine. Make sure that they have sufficient exercises and rest.
- Use appropriate parenting skills but do not spoil them.



Respect is Different from Spoiling



How do parents cooperate with schools?

Parents and schools are crucial partners in educating the young children

From kindergarten to primary schools, it takes time for children to adapt to their new environment. Hence, good parent-school collaboration may turn such stages into opportunities for children's growth.

From Home to Kindergarten

Parents should:

- accompany children to have an orientation of their schools prior to the commencement of the school year, so that children can get an idea of the new environment and teachers;
- enable the principal and teachers to have enough understanding of their children's living habits, family background and health conditions;
- understand the mission, and the learning modes of schools selected for their children; and
- participate in school activities, for example, by providing help in various activities to enhance home-school co-operation.



From Kindergarten to Primary School

- Kindergarten and primary education are different in terms of the learning environment and curriculum modes. The learning experiences of children in kindergarten have nurtured positive learning attitudes in them and enabled them to acquire basic learning abilities. Hence, it is not necessary to teach the primary curriculum in kindergarten in advance, for this may exert undue pressure on pre-school children.
- Parents should be well-prepared to help children deal with the psychological and emotional frustrations that may emerge in a new stage of learning. They should encourage children to talk about their daily experiences and express their feelings, and facilitate them to adapt to their new learning environment gradually.
- To facilitate a smooth transition to primary school life, it is helpful if parents can motivate children's interest in their daily life as well as foster a sense of responsibility in their own learning.
- Parents may make reference to the parent-child storybook "Helping Children to Adapt to Their New Primary School Life" (www.edb.gov.hk/kp/go_p1) and the "Leaflet for Parents on Helping Children to Adapt to Their New Primary School Life" (www.edb.gov.hk/kp/parents_kit) printed by the Curriculum Development Institute.



Conclusion

Quality early childhood education is child-centred. It means we should respect our children, understand their needs and abilities, as well as give them enough room to learn according to their own characteristics, including aptitude, learning style and progress, etc. They will in turn gain pleasurable learning experiences, enrich their knowledge, build up confidence and manage to communicate with others. Early childhood is an important stage for children to acquire various abilities for a balanced development. If we can provide them with sufficient learning opportunities and nourishment, they will grow prosperously like a seed under proper care and lay a solid foundation for future learning.

Ways to educate our children –



Appendix 1: Developmental Characteristics of Children from 2 to 6 Years Old

Age	Physical	Intellectual	Language	Social and Emotional
2 to 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to walk at their own will, pull and push objects or step backwards. ■ Able to pile up pieces of toy bricks. ■ Able to thread big beads. ■ Try folding papers and using scissors. ■ Know how to play with clay with their hands. ■ Gradually able to draw lines, circles, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Begin to learn matching by colours, shapes, objects and sizes. ■ Begin to understand the meaning of numbers one and two. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to name each body part. ■ Able to express their wishes with limited words and short sentences. ■ Know to ask with "what". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Know how to express the need for toileting. ■ Wetting sometimes still occurs in day time. ■ Not yet ready to share toys with peers. ■ Able to take turns with peers under instruction by adults. ■ Easy to get jealous towards peers who take away adults' attention from them. ■ Like to follow routines, dislike changes.
3 to 4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to ride a tricycle. ■ Able to walk along a line or on footprints. ■ Use scissors to cut paper strips. ■ Begin to hold a pencil properly to do drawing. ■ Able to draw a cross and inclined line by imitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to match three to four colours and identify their names. ■ Able to distinguish between two objects by their sizes, length, texture, hardness. ■ Begin to know how to classify and match objects like food, clothes, and able to associate objects according to their uses, such as shoes with socks and cups with plates. ■ Able to draw a person with head and some body parts. ■ Able to recite from one to ten. ■ Able to count from one to three or four. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pay attention when hearing stories, like to ask adults to repeat telling their favourite stories. ■ Begin to give a chronological account of incidents that happened in the past. ■ Able to describe with appropriate actions and voices. ■ Know how to control the volume and speed when speaking. ■ Begin to ask "what", "where" and "who". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to eat with a spoon. ■ Able to get water from a bottle. ■ Able to go to toilet on their own in day time, wetting seldom happens. ■ Know how to put on and pull down their trousers. ■ Try putting clothes on hangers. ■ Will take turns when playing toys. ■ Know that they should care for younger children and are willing to share toys with others. ■ Able to accept adults' advice, regard parents as authority and obey orders. ■ Begin to learn to show courtesy, able to say "please" and "thank you" as told.
4 to 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to jump forward and backward successively, with one foot and while running. ■ Able to throw and catch bean bags. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Begin to understand position and speed, e.g. able to distinguish front and back, fast and slow, middle and the first and the last, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Begin to understand the difference between "past" and "present". ■ Begin to express themselves with complex or much longer sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Begin to dress and undress, clean their noses, wash and dry their hands by themselves. ■ Able to get up to the toilet at night, no more wetting.

Age	Physical	Intellectual	Language	Social and Emotional
4 to 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Walk on a balance beam. ■ Begin to do simple paper cutting and pasting. ■ Able to cut simple pattern. ■ Able to thread beads. ■ Able to draw simple pictures such as people, houses, trees, vehicles, etc. ■ Able to fold a piece of paper along an inclined line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pay attention to their environment, able to point out the missing part in a picture. ■ Able to point out a different type of object. ■ Able to recite from one to twenty, count from one to ten or follow instructions to show one to five things. ■ Able to draw a man with head, body, limbs and features of the face. ■ Able to identify simple and common signs, like road signs and shop plates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to talk about experiences in everyday life. ■ Able to tell stories from pictures. ■ Able to use words like "because-therefore", "some", "several", "many" appropriately in conversation. ■ Able to tell relatives' names and the district which they themselves are living in. ■ Able to tell the colour of a particular object, like: banana is yellow. ■ Like asking for explanations of things they don't understand. ■ Begin to ask with "why", "when", "wow", etc. ■ Able to use opposite/complementary words and sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Willing to observe rules of the games when playing with other children. ■ Able to take care of younger children and small animals and console their companion when they feel unhappy. ■ Know how to say "thank you", "sorry".
5 to 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to draw straight lines with a ruler. ■ Able to cut out a pattern from a book. ■ Able to fold a piece of paper into half and then further half. ■ Able to put small beans into a bottle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Able to tell the general contents of pictures just seen. ■ Able to count from one to twenty, write from one to ten. ■ Able to place one to five in terms of quantity in correct sequence. ■ Able to tell the order and position of an object. (e.g. the first, the second). ■ Able to do simple mathematical addition and subtraction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Grammar and structure of children's language are more or less the same as adults. ■ Able to speak up in turn without digressing from the subject. ■ Able to give a logical account of what has happened recently. ■ Able to use words like "although", "however", "but", though sometimes inappropriately. ■ Begin to understand the difference of "yesterday", "today" and "tomorrow". ■ Understand words like in/out, far/near, bottom/top, enter/leave, start/end, etc. ■ Able to express feelings with appropriate words. ■ Use different adjectives to describe a person or an object. ■ Begin to understand the concept of calendar and time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If trained, able to clean up themselves after going to the toilet. ■ Able to tell their own home telephone number and address. ■ Able to play games which require co-operation with several peers, understand the principle of fair play and the need to follow group decisions, also able to explain rules of the game to other children. ■ Begin to choose companions that they like.

Note: The above information is excerpted from "Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum"(1996) and is for reference only. Parents are advised to use the information with flexibility and draw relevant verifications in light of their everyday observations.

Appendix 2 : Children's Behaviours that Require Concern

Age	Behaviours	Age	Behaviours
1.5 years	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cannot walk alone. 2. Does not play meaningfully but still engage in throwing and mouthing of objects. 	4 years	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appears clumsy in movement or manipulating simple tools such as spoons, forks, etc. 2. Has difficulty in following verbal instructions. 3. Does not speak in sentences. 4. Has unclear speech and difficulty in being understood. 5. Shows excessive or persistent aggressive behaviour. 6. Still clings and cries excessively whenever you (or the main caregiver) leaves him. 7. Shows no interest in interactive games with others. 8. Ignores other children and prefers playing on his own. 9. Appears not to see or hear well. 10. Has learning or behaviour problem at school.
2 years	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Still being unsteady (after walking for 6 months or so). 2. Unable to identify common household objects and body parts. 3. Does not follow simple instructions. 4. Does not use gestures or speech to direct your attention to his interest. 5. Does not speak single words. 6. Does not show any pretend play. 7. Does not show interest or understanding to what you have taught. 8. Appears not hear or see well. 	5 years	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shows excessively aggressive behaviour. 2. Is excessively timid, fearful, or emotionally labile. 3. Is easily distracted and inattentive when compared to others in class. 4. Shows little interest in other children and not joining in games. 5. Cannot follow instructions at home or in school. 6. Cannot relate simple events. 7. Cannot speak in sentences. 8. Has unclear speech. 9. Shows definite problem in learning concepts. 10. Appears clumsy in movement. 11. Appear clumsy in pencil skill or in using simple tools. 12. Does not see or hear well. 13. Has any other learning or behavioural problem at school.
3 years	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Falls frequently or has difficulty with stairs. 2. Appears clumsy in manipulating small objects eg. unwrap paper from a candy. 3. Fails to understand simple instructions e.g. "put the coat into the room". 4. Fails to communicate in 2-3 words phrases (eg. "drink juice", "want the ball"). 5. Shows no interest in other children. 6. Does not participate in pretend play. 7. Shows extreme difficulty in separating from mother in most situations. 		

Source: Family Health Service, Department of Health, "Happy Parenting!"



Acknowledgment

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The content of this Parent Booklet can be accessed at the following website:
http://www.edb.gov.hk/kg_guide_parent_booklet_eng

Other related websites:

Education Bureau <http://www.edb.gov.hk>

Parents' Corner, Hong Kong Education City <http://www.hkedcity.net/parent>

Committee on Home-School Co-operation <http://edbhsc.hkedcity.net>

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