



THE PRE-SCHOOL CURRICULUM*

Alana Rosebrett S. Balane

Featured in this article are two pre-schools - the University of the Philippines Child Development Center (UP CDC) and Wizard Academy. The UP CDC is the pioneer of all pre-schools in the country while Wizard Academy is relatively new.

UP CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

History and Objectives

The UP CDC serves as the laboratory pre-school of the Department of Family Life and Child Development (FLCD) of the UP College of Home Economics (UP CHE). Founded in 1957 with only six students by Dr. Aurora Corpuz, then dean of CHE, UP CDC has the following objectives: 1) to train FLCD students for effective preschool teaching, 2) to provide research materials about Filipino children to UP students, faculty and staff and other professionals and 3) to serve the community by providing a school where employees could send their children.

The Center aims to produce smart, independent and responsible children. Thus, it focuses on their holistic development (cognitive-affective-psycho-motor) and on their growth as members of a family and a community.

Curriculum

UP CDC followed the Piagetian curriculum which was widely used in the 1960s. It adhered to Piaget's theory that there are four stages of mental growth, namely sensori-motor stage, pre-operational stage, concrete operational stage and formal operational stage. It is in the first stage, from birth to two years, that the child begins to acquire motor skills. At two to seven years, s/he moves on to the next stage where s/he acquires his/her

verbal skills. In the concrete operational stage, from seven to 12 years old, the child learns to deal with abstract concepts such as numbers and relationships. In the last stage, when s/he is about 12-15 years, s/he learns to reason logically and systematically.

In the 1970s, however, the school adopted the progressivist philosophy that utilizes the theories of Dewey, Bruner and Spodek and conceptualized the integrated core curriculum. The progressive approach believes that learning must be child-and activity-centered. The child learns the concepts from his/her experiences as s/he goes through the activities. These activities are used to assess whether or not the child has understood the concepts well. The integrated core curriculum focuses on one theme that touches on all subject areas. It nurtures the individual's active interaction with his/her environment by using ample and varied materials. The Sample Material illustrates core curriculum materials/activities.

The integrated core curriculum framework includes the theme, thrust, stress, core and the organizing questions. The theme, stated as a sentence, is taken from cues as children react to the activities that they do in school. The thrust is the focus of the study and is based on the core. Stress is the activity or material to

Sample Material	
<p><i>Theme: I can do many things with my hands</i></p> <p><i>Core: Music</i></p> <p><i>Thrust: I</i></p>	<p><i>Theme: I can do many things with my body</i></p> <p><i>Core: Science</i></p> <p><i>Thrust: Body</i></p>
<p>1. Who am I? Concept(s): I am a girl I am 3 years old</p>	<p>1. What are the parts of the body? Label the parts; Identify functions, appearance and number of parts</p>
<p>2. What are the parts of my body? What does each perform?</p>	<p>2. How do they differ?</p>
<p>3. What can my hands do?</p>	<p>3. How do they work? How do the organs/systems work?</p> <p>4. What can I do with my body? What are the different things that I can do?</p>

*based on interviews with Prof. Carolyn Victoria Uy-Ronquillo of the UP College of Home Economics (FLCD Dept.) and Cynthia Amador, Director of Branch Operations, Wizard Academy



work with or the means to bring about the activity. The core is used as the springboard to bring out the theme and as a guide to the organizing questions. The organizing questions are consistent with the stress. The questions which are from simple to complex are tied to the concepts. The first question is based on the thrust while the last question must be answered by the theme.

Teacher

The school believes that the child can develop his/her optimum potential with the help of an adult who guides him/her through the learning process. This is accomplished through a series of questions that the teacher poses, thus assisting the child to focus and think critically. Such is the role of the teacher – that of a facilitator of learning. The school further believes that learning is spiral, that is, it moves from simple to complex stages.

Lessons and Schedule

The lessons are learned through play which is non-threatening. The classroom is divided into several learning areas such as housekeeping, blocks, art, manipulatives, reading, math, language arts, and science. This arrangement allows for active participation in class activities and encourages students to become responsible. The child learns to explore the things around him, to ask questions and to seek solutions to his/her problems on his/her own. The process of learning is given more importance than its product.

A typical daily schedule is as follows:

- 7:30-8:15 arrival; free play: blocks, playdough, art
- 8:15-8:45 meeting time: attendance chart, weather chart; calendar, greetings, planning
- 8:45-9:25 structured work: individual or group; core curriculum activities
- 9:25-9:35 discussion; snack/lunch preparation

- 9:35-9:50 snack/lunch; clean-up; toothbrush
- 9:50-10:20 outdoor playsand, water, nature walk; or storytelling, music or movement
- 10:20-10:30 change clothes; pack-away; reminders and letters; goodbyes

The sequence is strictly followed to establish routine. Once the children get used to the schedule, they can work on their own specially when their teacher cannot attend to them at once.

Assessment

UP CDC does not use numerical grades in assessing the children. Instead, teachers use a developmental checklist where the skills that a child has learned and mastered and those which the child still needs to master are marked. A narrative report is made for each child and is discussed with the parents during a parent-teacher conference.

Two things make UP CDC unique. First, it is the only pre-school attached to an academic institution, and second, it uses the family approach, that is, the child's performance is assessed in the context of the family.

WIZARD ACADEMY

History and Objectives

Wizard Academy which started as a computer school in 1995 seeks to revolutionize the concept of the preschool. It uses the multiple intelligences approach developed by Howard Gardner, a Harvard University professor. Gardner says that "... the essence of the theory is to respect the many differences among people. The multiple variations in which they learn, the most infinite number of ways in which they can leave a mark on the world." It therefore equips the child with the total learning experiences to develop all the intelligences, namely linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-



Children engaging in structured work at CDC



Nap time at CDC



Play time at CDC



kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. It employs the interactive multimedia approach where computers are used by the children. These computers and software become more than just toys. They equip the child with the basic skills and knowledge vital to the Information Age.

Teacher

The teacher acts as a facilitator. As such, s/he brings out the child's potential by helping him/her learn through discovery. S/He guides him/her but gradually and eventually leaves the child to journey on his/her own.

Lessons and Schedule

Wizard Academy's approach to learning is thematic. Teachers explore the subject matter and determine how this may be taught in the different subject areas. In a field trip, for example, to study the concept of "community", students count trees (math), identify the parts of a tree (science), and identify the members of the community (social studies). All the lessons are activity-based and are anchored on concrete experiences.

The educational materials that the school uses are thus activity-oriented. There are no standard textbooks. Skills are

taught through activity-based modules. Storybooks, play activities and interactive multimedia such as CDs are also used. The computers used have big and colorful mice and buttons to maintain the children's interests and to enable them to control the machines easily.

Assessment

Wizard Academy does not use any quantitative grading system. If a child shows or exhibits mastery of skills, this is reflected in assessment reports discussed with parents during individual conferences.

Conclusion

Both UP CDC and Wizard Academy believe that each child is unique and special. Children in both schools are free to experiment, explore and search for answers to their questions. The only difference between them is that Wizard Academy's curriculum is geared towards preparing children for the Information Age. Equipping them with the corresponding computer skills and competence then is primary. On the other hand, UP CDC puts more premium on children who would possess desired family and societal values.



Social Studies Humor

Some daffy definitions inadvertently made by students*

- The seats of the Senators will be vaccinated every six years.
- The President has the power to appoint and disappoint the members of Cabinet.
- The duties of a policeman are intoxication, robbery, murder, assault and arson.
- After a bill is passed by the Legislature a copy is printed on the seat of every member.
- If the President refuses to sign a bill it is returned to congress.

*<http://www.wkbradford.com.teachum.htm>