

## **Guide to Early Childhood**

Education as we are aware is about helping people live healthy, productive, happy and fulfilling lives. It is a continuous process, which recent scientific evidence shows begins in the womb from the moment of conception. “Learning” takes place everywhere. In the home, on the streets, the supermarkets, playgrounds, as well as in the classrooms. Consequently, receiving the correct stimulation and being exposed to beneficial experiences at precisely the right moment are essential conditions for healthy development.

We cannot over emphasize the undisputed fact that the most important years for learning are the early years. It has been proven repeatedly that children learn at a much faster rate from birth to eight years than they do at any other stage of their development.

The term “Pre-School” is a misnomer for it inadvertently creates an image of formal schooling. Instead the term Early Childhood Education, Care and Development has been adopted, to assist parents/guardians, care-givers and the general public to better understand and appreciate the nature and value of the work that has to be done with children during the early years.

Young children learn best through experience and direct involvement. These experiences should involve as many of the senses as possible. Piaget affirms that the more abundant children’s sensory experience and past associations, the richer their perceptions, the more they will know and the greater their learning potential.

Ultimately this is what we want, to mould and develop – their learning potential. The more they are helped and encouraged to find their own answers to their own questions, the more lasting and meaningful will be their learning. Young children do not need a formal education. They need an education that offers rich, varied, culturally and developmentally appropriate concrete experiences.

Young children need to be exposed to programmes and activities that:-

- ? Are action oriented.
- ? Encourage them to experiment, explore, investigate, discover for themselves.
- ? Challenge their thinking and powers of reasoning.

- ? Provide materials which motivate and help them to become self starters and independent, critical thinkers.

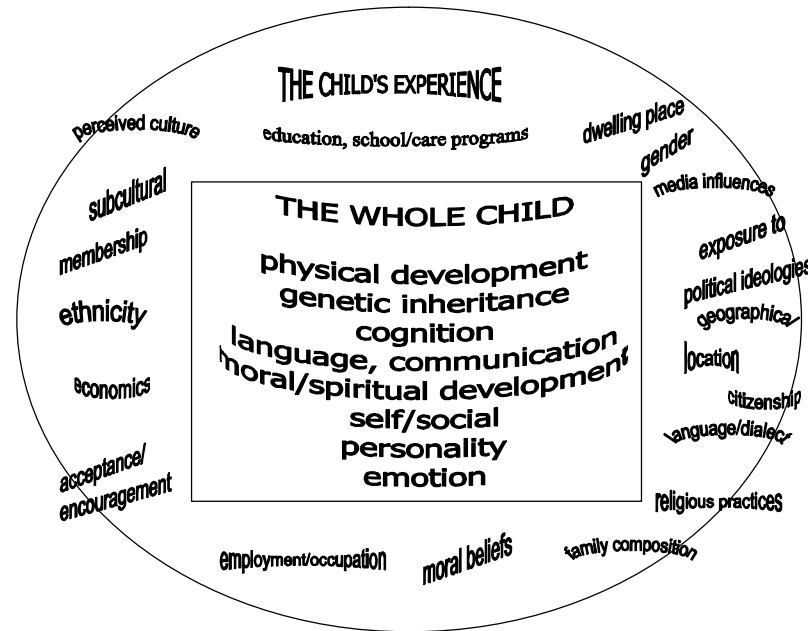
We are continually reminded that children are our future. Therefore, the transmission of intellectual, social and moral values that will guide and direct the future begins in the earliest months and years of life. If therefore, we truly believe that the children are our future, then by virtue of this fact, they are the agents of change as well as the custodians of continuity.

Consequently it is imperative that parents, educators and other stakeholders recognize and accept the pivotal role that Early Childhood Education, Care and Development plays in the advancement and sustainability of a people and a nation.



# The Whole Child

Child Development is a process in which the child learns to handle complex levels of moving, thinking, feeling and relating to others.



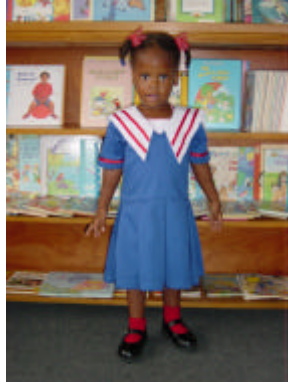
The Child is at the centre. Each interacting aspect of child's development is affected by all of the environmental factors that contribute to his or her experience of the world.

## Your Child as a Social Being

There are some characteristics which assist people fit in with the rest of society, to interact with each other and help to make us more humane.

To become a well-adjusted and integrated member of the society, the child needs to learn the rules of behaviour, which govern the society, from the earliest possible time.

**How well is your young child doing socially?**



**Social Behaviour Checklist**

- Shows concern for someone in distress
- Shows delight for someone experiencing pleasure
- Shares something with another
- Gives something of his/her own to another
- Takes turns with toys or activities
- Waits for turn without a fuss
- Helps another do a task
- Helps another in need

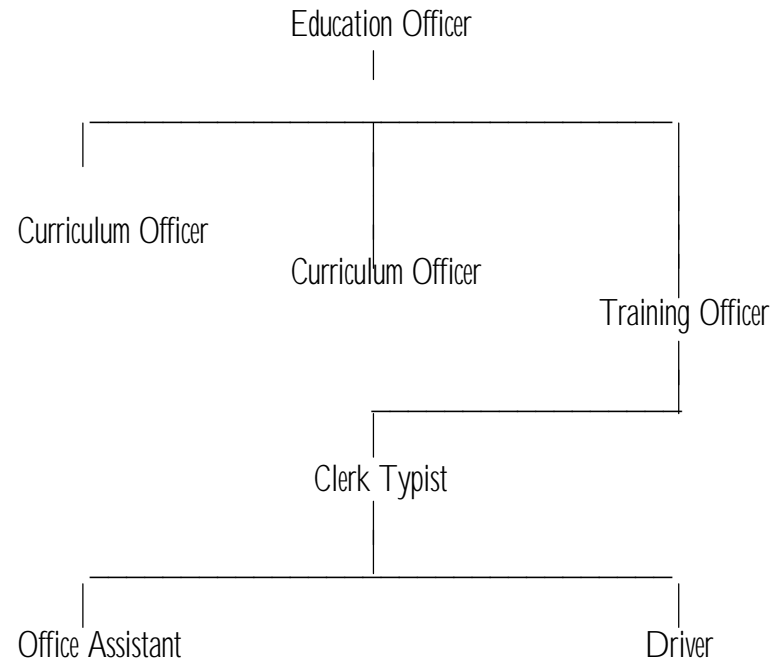
## Developmentally Appropriate Practice

The most important learning during the Early Years involves-

- ? Task Persistence
- ? Social Skills
- ? Feelings of Confidence
- ? Aspirations for the future

The Early Childhood Education Services Unit (formerly known as the Pre-School Services Unit) was established in 1985 with a mandate to provide regulatory and supervisory guidance to the Early Childhood Sector.

The Unit comprises seven members of staff. Namely:-



Through its varied activities and projects the Unit seeks to provide technical assistance to all providers of programmes for young children to further enhance the changing roles and attitudes of Early Childhood Educators by focussing on:-

- ? In-depth supervision and monitoring of staff performance and frequent assessment of learning environments.
- ? The establishment and adherence to National Minimum Standards for operating Early Childhood Facilities to ensure the quantitative and qualitative development of Early Childhood Education at the Community and National Levels
- ? Promoting and improving the Professional Development of all Early Childhood Educators, through carefully designed pre and in-service training programmes.
- ? Implementation of programmes designed to raise the consciousness level of the general public to the importance of Early Childhood Education.
- ? Facilitate and conduct Parenting and Parent Education Programmes designed specifically to help parents cope with and improve on their child rearing practices.

The Unit seeks to assist Early Childhood Educators and parents in providing for and promoting the development of basic competencies for meaningful social learning experiences through sound physical, intellectual stimulation and development which will encourage young children to become pro-active, self-motivated learners.