

## EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The Black Mountain Presbyterian Church Weekday School provides a program in which the Christian faith is taught and shared by children and teachers, and which is consistent with the highest standards of early childhood education.

The Weekday School curriculum supports the belief that children learn best through active involvement with materials, other children, and adults in developmentally appropriate play. Classrooms are set up in learning centers, and children are free to choose activities and move in and out of the centers. These centers allow and encourage individual differences in maturity, and challenge children to make discoveries on their own.

We seek to provide an intellectually stimulating and emotionally wholesome environment for children to explore, ask questions, move, interact, experience, play, create, and progress developmentally in freedom within limits. Our approach is focused on the whole child and how that child learns physically, socially, emotionally, cognitively, in language and literacy, culturally, and spiritually. We seek to integrate all these domains of development by providing optimal experiences in:

### CREATIVE ART

- ▶ Each child has the opportunity to manipulate, explore, and create with a variety of art materials in a process, rather than product, oriented manner.
- ▶ Each child is encouraged to create out of his/her own feelings. As children grow and develop more thinking skills they are encouraged to dictate stories about their art if they choose.

### MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Each child has the opportunity to develop motor skills through use of appropriate large muscle and small muscle equipment, and will be observed by teachers who encourage and supervise development of these skills.
- ▶ Children play outside or in the church fellowship hall each day in order to use their large muscles for movement and exercise.

### LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

- ▶ Children are encouraged to engage in individual and group activities to develop listening skills and use of language.
- ▶ Vocabulary building is a part of every activity, and new words are introduced in a context that gives meaning and understanding. Words are sometimes introduced through music and movement.
- ▶ Children have the opportunity to become storytellers and experience acting out their creative ideas.
- ▶ Children participate in activities to develop concepts of color, size, shape, position, location, relative number terms, relative weight and sizes, classification and substance. These concepts are reinforced through games and firsthand experiences.
- ▶ Children are encouraged to express themselves often with their peers and teachers to develop discussion and mediation skills.
- ▶ Children are encouraged to experiment, ponder, and look for answers to questions instead of being told the answer. Questions children will hear to challenge their developing thinking may include: *What if? What do you think will happen? What are other ways we could find out?*
- ▶ Children have opportunities to hear many kinds of music and to sing, move, relax, or respond in other ways to music in the classroom, playground, and fellowship hall.
- ▶ Musical activities are used to teach concepts, reinforce learning, and develop skills, in addition to being enjoyed for their own sake.
- ▶ Music from a variety of cultures is heard, and will expose children to a variety of sounds and styles. International rhythm instruments are used so children can experiment and play.

## DRAMATIC PLAY

- ▶ Children are encouraged to play and use their imagination outdoors, in learning centers (home, block, manipulative) and, more formally, in story time and group activities.
- ▶ Themes that emerge in children's play are used as additional learning opportunities and integrated into other areas of learning.

## MATH SKILLS

- ▶ Children are encouraged to sort, classify, and measure during both planned and unplanned activities in the school day.
- ▶ In order to provide understanding of math concepts, numbers, and skill in problem solving, children are given many opportunities for concrete experiences with math, using objects which can be touched, moved, and manipulated.

## SOCIAL SKILLS

- ▶ Children are encouraged to relate to others in ways that are fair and satisfying for all in a group situation. Children learn how to enter play group situations and learn loving ways to be a friend. Respect for all children and adults is of paramount importance.
- ▶ Mediation skills are taught to provide children with the words to settle their differences. Children are encouraged to treat one another as children of God. Peace, justice, and fairness are modeled and taught as guiding principles.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

- ▶ Children are taught their names and information about self and family.
- ▶ Children are taught an awareness of Christian and secular holidays and traditions. Children are helped to identify seasonal changes and events that occur during the different seasons.
- ▶ Children explore the many ways in which people live together, work, raise food, and travel in our diverse, multicultural world, and learn to celebrate diversity within our community and the world. Toys, books, posters, dress-up clothes, and dolls in the classroom will reflect world diversity.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

- ▶ Children are encouraged to practice good health and safety procedures both inside and away from the classroom.
- ▶ Children are taught how to reduce the spread of germs through stringent hand washing.

## RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS

- ▶ Children hear Bible stories, verses, and concepts appropriate for their age, and are taught the stories using songs, games, and dramatic activities. There is intentional inclusion of Bible stories, statements of Christian faith, and specific Biblical concepts in the curriculum. Bible stories are chosen appropriately for each age level, not just because they are Bible stories. We acknowledge that the Bible is an adult book written by adults for adults. Therefore, we are more concerned with Biblical truths than specific facts for young children. The standard for choosing Bible stories is based on the following concepts:

God is.

All the wonders of the world are God's gift.

God loves each of us as a person of worth.

God forgives the wrongs we do when we fail to trust, obey, or love God.

We know these things because Jesus came to tell and to show us they are true.

The Bible is the book that tells the story of God's love through Jesus Christ.

- ▶ Everyday experiences are interpreted in ways consistent with the Biblical understanding of God's plan for all people and with the teaching of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- ▶ Each classroom has an open Bible and a picture of Jesus and the children. Children hear teachers read from this Bible. Religious concepts are integrated into the total curriculum. Children will feel that "God loves me" through the care and nurture of teachers and church staff.
- ▶ Each family will know it is supported, respected, and nurtured by the teaching staff regardless of the religious beliefs of the family members.