DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 352 790 EC 301 723

TITLE	Avondale Integrative Model (AIM).
INSTITUTION	Avondale School District, Auburn Hill, MI.
PUB DATE	Dec 92
NOTE	41p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Conference of the Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Early Childhood (Washington, DC, December 2-6, 1992).
PUB TYPE	Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Developmental Programs; *Disabilities; *Language Acquisition; *Mainstreaming; Models; Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Program Implementation; School Readiness; *Student Development; Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Avondale Public Schools MI; *High Scope Model; Project Head Start

ABSTRACT

The A.I.M. (Avondale Integrative Model) Program of Avondale School District in Auburn Hills, Michigan, is a developmental, language-based, preschool program, combining federally funded Head Start and district-funded Pre-Primary Impaired programs. The program is designed to utilize a developmentally appropriate curriculum in order to successfully integrate children identified as having special needs into a regular preschool program. The cognitively oriented curriculum is based on the High Scope model, with the addition of a theme approach and the need to fulfill individual goals of the children assigned to the program. This report describes the daily routine, physical facilities, safety, adult involvement, language and thought development, transition into the program, assessment, humanistic considerations, behavior intervention procedures, administrative responsibilities, and a rationale for mixed-age grouping in early education. (JDD)

AVONDALE INTEGRATED MODEL
(A.I.M.)

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AIM MISSION STATEMENT

We AIM to provide eligible preschool children and their families with a child-driven developmental curriculum appropriate to each child's area of strengths and weaknesses based on the belief every child is best able to learn when given opportunities at his/her levels of capabilities.

MISSION2.DEC

AVONDALE INTEGRATIVE MODEL

The A.I.M. (Avondale Integrative Model) Program is a developmental, language-based, preschool program which began in September, 1990. The program is a combination of the federally-funded Head Start and district-funded Pre-Primary Impaired programs. A.I.M. designed to utilize a developmentally appropriate curriculum for three and four-year-olds, in order to successfully integrate children who had been identified as having special needs into a regular preschool program. Head Start is seen as an ideal program in which to include special needs children, as the federal guidelines have always demanded that at least ten percent of the Head Start population in a given classroom be identified as disabled.

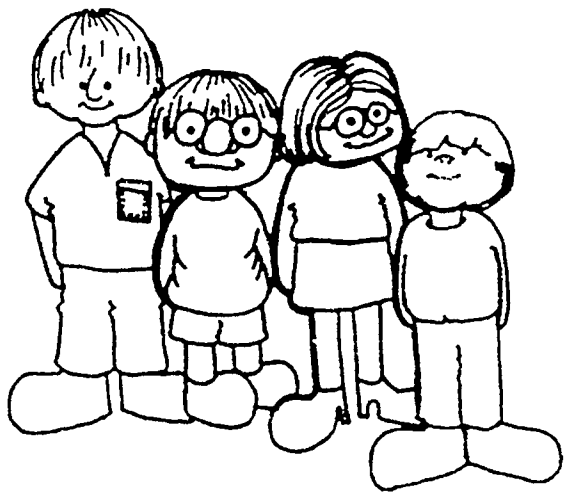
The A.I.M. program is in session four days a week, with morning and afternoon sessions of three hours each. (Monday through Thursday, A.M.= 9:00-12:00, P.M.= 1:00-4:00) Children are assigned to a session by their site of residence, so that three and four-year-olds are mixed in each session. The program is fortunate to have three classrooms at its' disposal, and during work time - which is at least an hour and half per day - the children may move freely between areas. There are five staff persons including a speech pathologist assigned to the program, with the additional assistance of a social worker/psychologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, and parent volunteers, to staff each of the three classrooms on a rotating basis. Thus, on a daily basis, each classroom has at least one permanent staff member assigned to it, and the fourth staff member "floats" to the classroom of most interest, or handles emergencies as they arise. Therapists and parents are free to help out an necessary, or carry out individual activities with children for whose goals they are responsible.

The A.I.M. curriculum is based on the High Scope model of a cognitively oriented curriculum, with the addition of a theme approach as guidance for small group activities, and the need to fulfill individual goals of the children assigned to the program under the Pre-Primary Impaired guidelines. The day includes planning, work time, recall, small group, gross motor play (either outside or in the gym) and a weekly circle time. The children are fully integrated excepting only those times when Head Start children must eat, during which time the Pre-Primary Impaired class is free to work on individual needs. Children are encouraged to make their own plans for the day, to carry out those plans during work time, and to share with their peers and the adults what they did during school at recall. Small groups are assigned by small groups running concurrently for about twenty minutes each session.

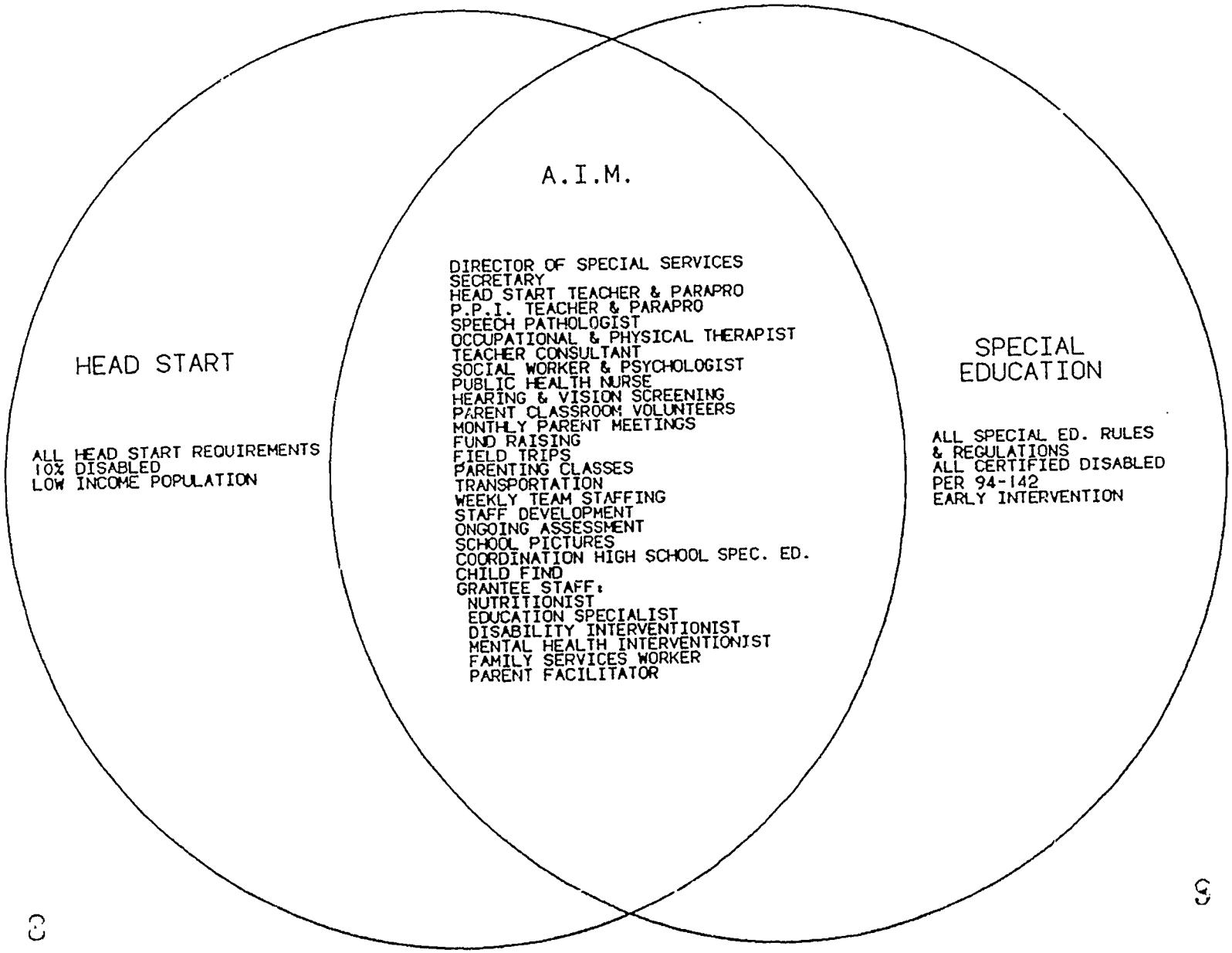
Parent involvement is an integral part of the A.I.M. program. Parent groups occur once a month, and parent volunteers in the program are an important reason for A.I.M. success. Most parents volunteer twice a month, so that there is usually a parent in the

program each day. Involvement ranges from acting as officers in the parent group to an occasional visit to observe a child's progress. Parent involvement makes for excellent communication between the home and school, and is a good way for all parents to observe the development of three and four-year-old children, whether identified as disabled or not.

The A.I.M. program is still evolving and growing as problems or new ideas develop. The staff and administration are committed to the ideal of allowing children to develop naturally at their own rate, with the willing support of involved and caring adults.



AVONDALE INTEGRATED MODEL



THE DAILY ROUTINE

Many adults visiting the A.I.M. program have been surprised to observe the children engaged in play activities for a large part of the day. The A.I.M. curriculum is based on the cognitively oriented preschool curriculum which has been used successfully throughout the country and was first begun at the Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project since the early 1960's. This curriculum is in keeping with the Avondale school district's emphasis on thinking skills. Through the use of this curriculum, A.I.M. is able to provide a quality educational program for a diverse population of children with widely varying levels of development and abilities.

PLANNING TIME

At planning time adults and children meet together to talk about what each child wants to do and how the child might go about doing it. Children decide for themselves how they'll use their work time, and the adult encourages the child to say or demonstrate (if the child is non or pre-verbal) what he or she would like to do. Instead of imposing choices on children, the adult helps them learn how to identify choices themselves. Usually children cannot make a single plan for the entire work time, so he or she indicates a starting activity and then makes another plan during work time when finished with the first project. Although planning time is a designated time of the day, the planning process continues throughout work time, as children complete their activity and plan again.

Children who plan for themselves see that they can make things happen. Children begin to view themselves as people who can decide and who can act on their own decisions; they have some control over their own activities. Planning also gives children a chance to recognize and respond to their own moods in a constructive way...an adult can help the child to recognize moods and plan appropriate activities.

It is important for a child to talk over a plan before he or she carries it out. This helps the child form a mental picture of his or her idea and get a notion of how to proceed, or at least where to start. For adults, talking over the plan provides an opportunity not only to encourage and respond to children's ideas, but also to help carry them out.

Not all children can come up with something they want to do, especially when they're just beginning to learn about planning. An adult might need to offer some choices to such children, to help them learn a few of the possibilities of the room. The planning process takes time to learn. Before children can plan successfully they need to: learn which materials are available, learn the names

of the work areas, learn the names of other people in the room, begin to make choices and see alternatives, learn signs and planning boards, learn when and where to plan. All of this takes time, and some children will need longer than others to effectively plan his or her day.

WORK TIME

Work time is the heart of the preschool day, and the longest single time period in the daily routine. This is a busy and active time for both children and adults, when children carry out their planning time ideas. They may use any of the three A.I.M. classrooms to explore materials, learn new skills, try out ideas, and put together what they know in ways that make sense to them. Adults move among the children, observing and helping them carry out or extend their activities.

While most children enjoy work time and look forward to it, adults new to the curriculum often find work time confusing, because they are not sure of their role. Adults do not lead work time activities - each child plans his or her own - but neither do adults sit back and watch. Work time is a time for adults to observe and learn what interests children and how they perceive and solve problems, to take cues form children, and to work along with them to support, encourage, and extend children's ideas and language.

Children need work time because they need a time to work on the things they've planned, to learn at their own pace using the materials that interest them. Work time gives children an opportunity to organize and act on part of their world, to decide which toys, tools and equipment are best for their purposes and to develop the skills necessary to use them with ease. Children begin to see adults as people who will assist them and support their ideas and actions. Adults learn that even very young children have many ideas, desires, and capacities, and that given the opportunity to act on their own in a supportive environment, children work creatively, effectively, and eagerly. Adults can assist children during work time by; getting work time plans started, helping a child who others reject, helping decide what to do next, recognizing and supporting a child's work, helping children extend their plans and ideas by asking questions, helping children change deal with work time conflicts.

CLEAN-UP

During clean-up time, children put away the toys and materials they've been using during work time. They also may wipe tables, wash paint brushes, jars, or cooking utensils and sweep or vacuum floors. As they sort, pile, stack, empty, and fit together materials at clean-up time, children learn not only where things

go, but that similar things go together. They begin to understand the system for finding the things they need, and that the symbols on the shelves stand for real objects - a realization necessary for reading. Sorting things out, putting materials back and cleaning up also helps children see that clean-up is part of any task they undertake. Children begin project by thinking it through and getting out the appropriate materials; the project ends when the materials are put away.

Adults in the program can assist children during clean-up time by encouraging children to clean up throughout work time as they finish one plan and are ready to begin another, warning the children toward the end of work time that in a few minutes it will be clean-up time, giving a clear and consistent signal that clean-up has begun, defining specific individual tasks for children who are having difficulty learning what constitutes clean-up,and assisting cheerfully in clean-up activities.

RECALL TIME

Recall time gives children the opportunity to remember and represent what they did during work time. Recalling work time activities completes the planning and doing process - by looking back at what they've done children can start to see the relation between their plans and their activities, and can develop more awareness of their own actions and ideas. Children recall what they did at work time by talking about their actions, showing something they used at work time, sharing a product either completed or still in progress, drawing pictures or pantomiming their actions for others to guess. The recall process, like the planning process, occurs throughout work time as children complete activities and talk about them with an adult before making a new plan. By recall time a child may already have gone through the recall process several times. An adult might then use recall time to help him or her remember the initial plan and the other plans made during work time. This would help him begin to see that his work time plan is made up of all the things he chose to do.

In the process of recalling what they've done, children attach language to their actions. This makes them more conscious of their action and more able to refer to them and draw upon them for later use. Talking about, recalling, and representing their actions help children evaluate and learn from their experience. Recalling in a small group helps children get ideas from each other about things they might like to try at work time. Recall time provides an opportunity for children to share and learn from each other's experiences and to hear how other children describe their activities.

An adult may help a child recall by talking briefly about what the child was doing at work time, or asking another child or adult to assist.

SMALL-GROUP TIME

During small-group time each adult meets with 5 to 8 children to work on the activities planned by the team to provide some of the key experiences of cognitive growth. Adults plan small-group activities around the interests and abilities of the children in their groups, allowing for individual ideas and differences. They use this time to observe their children, expose them to new materials and give them a chance to find new ways of using materials they already know. Work time and small-group time share many characteristics. During both times, children work actively with materials, talk with other children and adults about what they're doing, and do things at their own rate and in their own way. At small-group time a small group of children gather in one place and find ways to use similar materials which an adult has thought about and prepared or gathered in advance, while at work time children work in various ways all over the room with a wide range of materials of their own choosing. Small-group time is important for children because it opens up possibilities and choices they might not otherwise be aware of, and which they can incorporate in their work time plans. For children who generally work by themselves, this is a chance for peer contact and interchange. For children who always work in the same area, small-group time is a chance to use and find out about materials from other areas. Because children are gathered together, it is often easier for an adult to observe and assess children during small-group time than it is during work time.

OUTSIDE TIME

Outside time is a time when children can run, jump, skip, hop, climb, slide, push, throw, dig, race, shout, hide, roll, and haul. Aside from the obvious advantages to children's health and well-being, the main rationale for outside time is that it enables children to try out work time ideas and discoveries outside the classroom. Also, because outside time is less constricted and intense than work time, some otherwise quiet children can open up, talking and working with other children more freely than they do inside. A child who has difficulty inside where he knocks over other children's projects may excel outside where he can teach others to climb, swing, and run really fast. In an ever more dangerous world for children, supervised outside time with developmentally appropriate and safe equipment is an important part of any school day.

Adults should be actively involved with children in their games and activities; as they play with children, they should talk with them about what they're doing, help them solve problems and find alternatives and support, encourage and extend their activities.

CIRCLE TIME

At circle time the whole group of children and adults gather for an active 10 or 15 minutes of playing games, making up and singing songs, doing finger plays, learning dances, or playing musical instruments. Circle time provides an opportunity for each child to participate in a large group, sharing and demonstrating his or her ideas and trying out and imitating the ideas of others. At circle time he or she can sometimes be a leader and sometimes a follower. Circle time provides an opportunity for children to learn the social skills of imitation, turn-taking, listening to others, and group effort. Adults can assist children during circle time by sitting near them, making sure they understand how they can participate, and encouraging them to share their own ideas with a larger group.

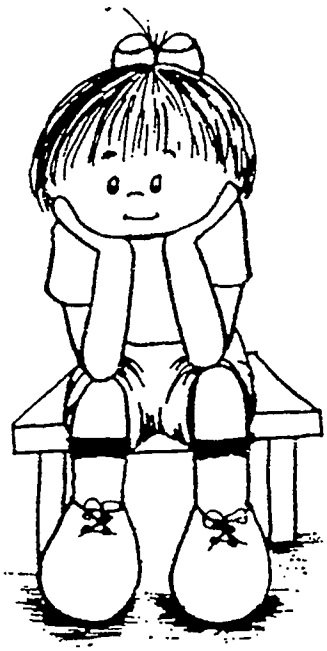
At all times during the school day children are encouraged and supported in their efforts to succeed at their own tasks, and to take responsibility for their own needs.

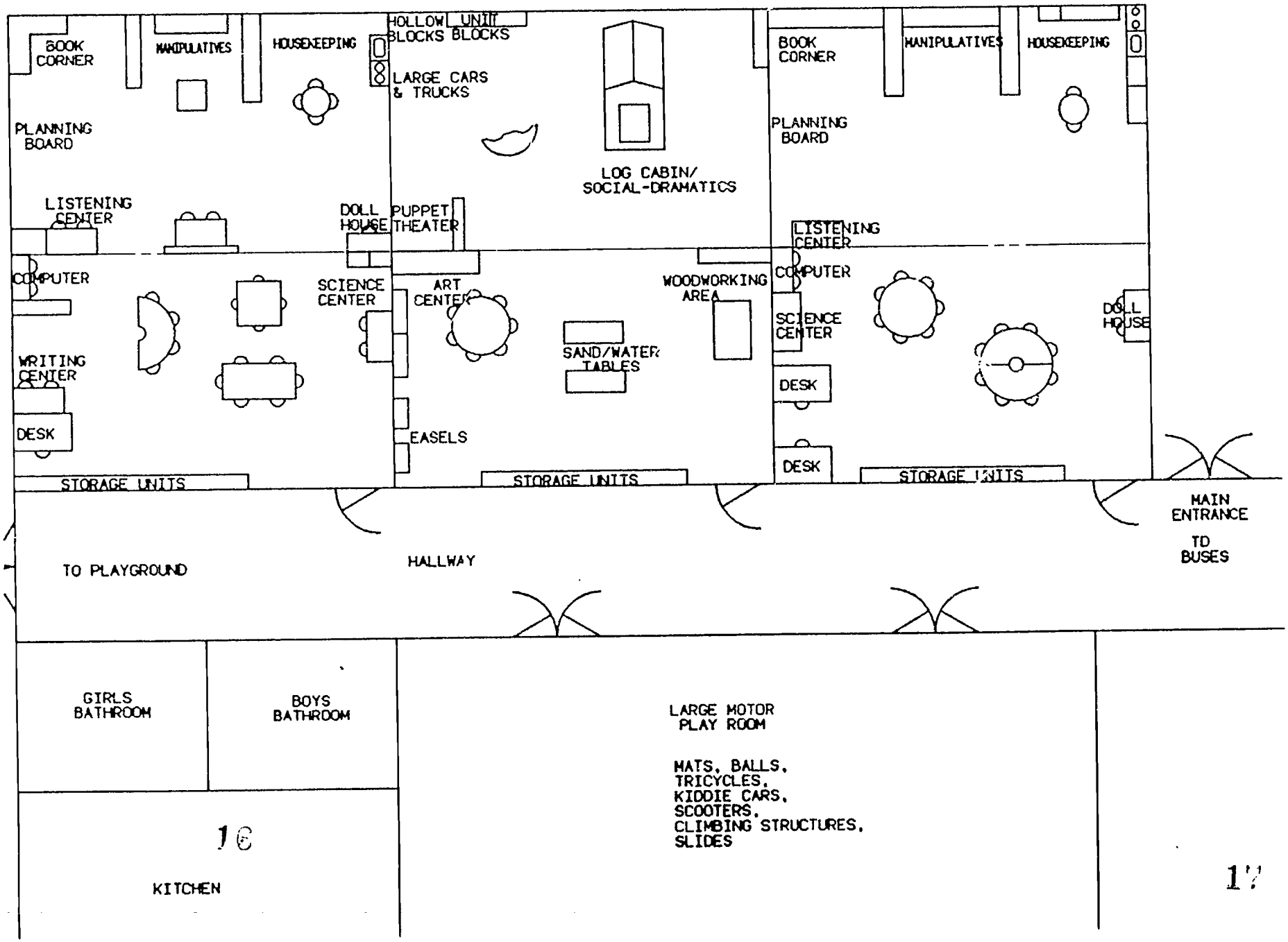
--Information from Young Children In Action by Mary Hohmann

ROUTINE.DEC-AIM

A.I.M. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The AIM program is located in the Administration Building of Avondale Schools, at 260 South Squirrel Road, Auburn Hills, Michigan. Currently AIM occupies three classrooms in one wing of the building, with a set of bathrooms, playroom, and kitchen across the hallway. Other than eating times, all of the children in the program have the use of centers in all three classrooms. AIM is administered through the Special Services Office, which is down the hallway (Phone: 313 - 852-4443). The only other classrooms in the building are occupied by the Community Education Daycare, Toddler, and Nursery programs.




BOOK CORNER
MANIPULATIVES
HOUSEKEEPING
HOLLOW BLOCKS
UNIT BLOCKS
LARGE CARS & TRUCKS
PLANNING BOARD
LOG CABIN/ SOCIAL-DRAMATICS
LISTENING CENTER
DOLL HOUSE
PUPPET THEATER
COMPUTER
SCIENCE CENTER
ART CENTER
WOODWORKING AREA
SAND/WATER TABLES
WRITING CENTER
DESK
EASELS
STORAGE UNITS
BOOK CORNER
MANIPULATIVES
HOUSEKEEPING
PLANNING BOARD
LISTENING CENTER
COMPUTER
SCIENCE CENTER
DOLL HOUSE
DESK
DESK
STORAGE UNITS
MAIN ENTRANCE
TO BUSES
TO PLAYGROUND
HALLWAY
GIRLS BATHROOM
BOYS BATHROOM
LARGE MOTOR PLAY ROOM
MATS, BALLS, TRICYCLES, KIDDIE CARS, SCOOTERS, CLIMBING STRUCTURES, SLIDES
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KITCHEN
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AIM SAFETY

Safety of all AIM children is everyone's responsibility. To ensure the safety of all our children, it is essential that a consistent procedure is in place and enforced. Here is a review of that process.

1. All visitors and parents of AIM must, upon arrival at school, report to the special services office and sign in. That office is located to the left of the main entrance, up the 3 steps, first door on your left.

2. At the beginning of each month, AIM staff asks parents to volunteer twice during the month, at two-week intervals. We all appreciate this, as it's one of the best ways you can help your AIM child. When you arrive at school to volunteer, please continue to report to the special services office and sign in.

3. In the event you want to visit or observe AIM at a time other than your volunteer day, you need to contact Dr. Martin to prearrange that visit. No drop-in visits or observations other than those which are prearranged can be allowed during school hours.

4. Children will not be released to an adult other than parent unless written directives (no phone calls please) from the parent/guardian are given to AIM staff prior to the day of the event. This requirement includes requests to allow the student to get off the school bus at other than the usual bus stop for that child.

5. A fan out to notify you of unusual situations, like snow days, is in place to keep you informed.

6. We appreciate your telephone calls to tell us of your child's illness and/or absence from AIM for the day. This helps us to know we need not worry about the whereabouts of your child.

7. Please call our office at 852-4443 with any concerns or questions. We're eager to work with you to keep our children safe.

SAFETY.DEC

ADULT INVOLVEMENT IN PLAY

In planning play activities it is helpful to think about the adult's intervention interims of the three categories of environmental facilitation.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITATION

This type of intervention includes the physical arrangement of the room and the provision of needed materials. The teacher carefully considers what each child will need in these two areas and provides it. She further observes the children while play is in session to see how they play in the set-up and with the materials.

CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY

In this type of intervention the adult observes the children's play and tries to fit into and be responsive to the play to the degree that the children allow or seem interested. If the children do not want to interact with the adult, the adults can simply play on their own in a parallel fashion to the children and hope that the children will either notice the adult's play or become interested in interacting. If the child becomes interested in interaction, the adult should try to give the leadership back to the children. The adult does not take the lead in the play or try to direct the course and/or sequence of the play. Play, in order to be real play and provide the most benefits, must be child-initiated and child-directed.

ADULT-DIRECTED PLAY

During adult-directed play the adult carefully plans the play activity and has specific goals for interacting with each child or for child/child and child/materials interaction. The adult guides and leads the child's play activity. This type of play is not actually true play in that the child is not initiating the play situation.

TYPES OF ADULT INVOLVEMENT

1. Parallel Playing: Occurs when the adult is close to the child and play with the same materials. The adult does not, however, interact with the child or impinge on the child's play.

   Benefits:

   1. Adults; presence can comfort children and indicate to them that play is worthwhile activity.
   2. Children likely to persist longer in their play when adult is present.
   3. Children may learn new ways of playing with materials by watching the adult play.

2. Co-Playing: Occurs when adult joins in an ongoing play episode but lets the children control the course of the play, while primarily responding to the children's comments and actions. The adult occasionally asks questions and makes remarks that can extend the play.

   Types of comments used:

   1. Asking for information: "Do you have any ketchup?"
   2. Asking for instructions: "How do I get the cap off?"
   3. Responding to the children's actions and comments: "Very delicious!"

   Benefits:

   1. Expresses some approval and encourages persistence like parallel play.
   2. Allows adult to build rapport with children and influence the level of play.

   NOTE: Most appropriate with children who already engage in high-level play, but who have become bogged down in repetitious play. Less successful with children who lack experience in high-level play or who lack the prerequisite cognitive or social skills.

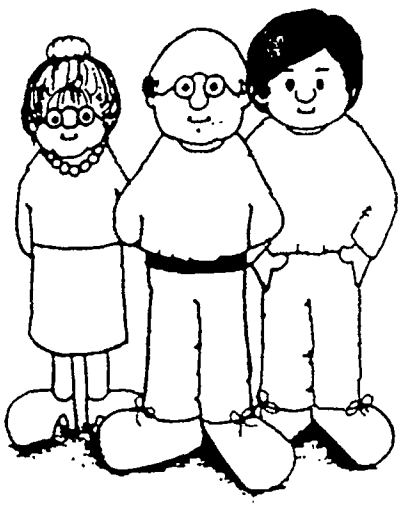
3. Play Tutoring: Differs from co-playing in 3 ways: (1) In play tutoring the adult often initiates a new play episode, whereas an adult co-player always joining play already in progress; (2) Adult takes a more dominant role in the play and has at least partial control over the course of the play episode; (3) Adult teaches the child new play behaviors.

1. Outside intervention: Adult makes comments and suggestions designed to encourage children to use sociodramatic play behaviors.
2. Inside intervention: Adult takes on a role and actually joins in the children's play. While in the role, the adult models play behaviors the children have not been using.
3. Thematic-fantasy training: Adult read children a story. Then the adult assigns roles to children and helps them enact the story.

Advantages:
1. Because adult initiated the play, play tutoring is better suited for use which children who do not engage in sociaodramatic play.
2. Involves tutorial interactions between adults and children which have been found to result in reich adult-child conversations and appear to be responsible for many of the cognitive gains brought about by play training.

Disadvantages:
1. Places control of play in hands of adult. This can take internal control and motivation away from children so that the activity may cease to be play.

4. Spokesman for Reality: Occurs when the play is used as a medium for academic instruction. Adult remains outside the play and encourages children to make connections between their play and the real world. Adult's questions and suggestions aimed at suspending make-believe and interjecting reality into play.



ADULTS.DEC

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Parents Volunteering in the Classroom

Parent Classroom Objective: Assist staff n the presenting of a quality educational program.

Assist Children By:

Being a good listener
Observing children's progress
Interacting with children
Role modeling good manners and reinforcing
Letting children dissolve differences whenever possible

Classroom Rules Include Safety at all Times

No running in the classroom, hall, or bathrooms.
Wooden structures are to be built no higher than the shoulders of a child.
Safety when using equipment in the classroom.
Aggression towards other children should be addressed with the teachers.

Art Area

Children are to be allowed freedom of creativity at all times.
All children use paint aprons when painting.

Clean up and Care of Equipment

All children and adults help by placing equipment in the proper places.

AIM staff is committed to the family's right to confidentiality, therefore we request that parent volunteers refrain from discussing children in the classrooms.

If you have any questions about any learning area, please discuss with the staff.

Parents, children, and staff all benefit from your volunteer time! THANK YOU!!!

GUIDELIN.DEC

DEVELOPING LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT THROUGH SYSTEMATIC PLAY FACILITATION

The Components of the training program are based on current approaches to cognitive development regarding organization of knowledge intro frames, schemas, scripts, and plans, and knowledge of the elements and developmental stages of play. The training program includes 3 components: (1) The pre-play stage involving the development of the knowledge necessary for play, (2) the symbolic play stage involving consolidation of this knowledge into pretend play, and (3) the Decontextualization/substitution stage involving less reliance on realistic props.

I. The pre-play activities include the following:

A. Discovering the knowledge base the children possess using semantic webbing.
B. Developing frames. A frame is a collection or array of items that generally appear together, e.g., the object found in a kitchen, a store, a doctor's office, etc., who used them, how they are used.
C. Developing schemas. A schema involves a progression or sequence in which the items in the frame are arranged, e.g., what object can be used together, for what purposes, and in what order or sequence.
D. Developing scripts or the language used in carrying out the schemas, e.g., what is said in the home, in the store, in the doctor's office, etc., who said it, how is it said.
E. Developing plans, i.e., organizing the frames, schemas, and scripts. The children develop plans for the play, e.g., who is playing each part, what they will need, what they will do, how they will do it.

Elementary Planning Questions

1. What is the activity?
2. What roles are needed?
3. Who is needed?
4. Who will play each role?
5. When does the activity occur?
   Season
   Time of day
   Year
6. What props are needed?
   Who is responsible for specific props?
7. What will each character do?
8. What will happen if.....?
9. What problems will come up?

Mid-School Play Planning Form

1. What is your goal? What do you want to do?
2. Who will you work with?
3. List the materials you will need?
4. What will you do with the materials? List the steps?
5. What problems might come up?

II. Symbolic play -- consolidation of the knowledge from the first training component. In the actual play situation, the nature of the adult's involvement and prompting varies systematically.

A. First the adult takes an actual role in the play, modeling how the materials are used and what is said.
B. Then the adult acts as a stage manager to the play, sitting back and cuing the children -- reminding them to talk, asking them what they are doing, or giving them cues for what to do or say.
C. Finally, the children play together without any adult modeling or cuing. The adult observes the children's play, and based upon the children's performance, the adult may in a later session provide modeling or stage directions, may move back to any of the structured pre-play activities, or may move to the decontextualized play component.

III. The Third stage involves increasing the degrees of decontextualization and object substitution in the play, i.e., moving from real life experiences to pretend play with real props, then representational props, and finally no props.

WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO THE CHILD TO ENGAGE IN SYMBOLIC PLAY?

1. It increases the capacity and/or tendency to use internal representation.
2. It provides a vehicle for active assimilation of new material and, thus, for more elaborated mental structures.
3. It strengthens the "as-if" mental attitude, the ability to deal with non-present or hypothetical situations.
4. It increases social competence because adult roles are tried out and practiced and because of the rich occasions for interaction among the players.

NURTURING SYMBOLIC PLAY: WHEN TO ACT

1. When it does not involve disengaging the child from what he/she is involved in.
2. When the child appears to find the next step overwhelming. For example, when a child is somewhat shy, younger than the others in the group, or from a different cultural group, he/she may lack skills in approaching others and carving out a role for himself, as well as a sufficient understanding of the specific content of play.
3. When play seems to be proceeding at a restricted level.
   a. Restricted in terms of the limited nature of the children's knowledge of the role(s), the setting, etc.
   b. Restricted in terms of the level (representational, interactive) of the make believe.

Smilansky identified 6 elements of "good dramatic play":

(1) Imitative role play. The child understand a make-believe role and expresses it in imitative action and/or verbalization.
(2) Make-believe with regard to objects. Movements or verbal declarations are substituted for real objects.
(3) Make believe in regard to actions and situations. Verbal descriptions are substituted for actions and situations.
(4) Persistence. The child persists in a play episode for at least 10 minutes.
(5) Interaction: There are at least two players interacting in the framework of the play episode.
(6) Verbal communication: There is some verbal interaction related to the play episode.

NURTURING SYMBOLIC PLAY: WHAT TO DO

1. Provide opportunities for sustained symbolic play.
   For dramatic play to develop optimally, it is important to allow for relatively large blocks of free-play time. Three 15 minutes of free-play do not serve the same goal as one 45-minute period. The development of the ability to sustain and elaborate symbolic play situations should be supported by not breaking up the play episode. Peers can also be disruptive to dramatic play, particularly when the children involved are just beginning to develop the ability to immerse themselves in

a make-believe situation. Children need to be protected from other children who would disrupt their play.

2. Provide experiences which "prime the pump" for dramatic play. Children draw the raw material for their make-believe play from the adult world they see around them, the world they are trying to understand and enter. Any of the child's experiences with what adults do, how they dress and talk, and with how they relate to others -- experiences from home, school, community, or through the media -- are grist for the mill. Parents and teachers play a role in determining the rage of the child's exposure, as well as the degree to which the child notices and understands what he is exposed to.

3. Provide props for symbolic play.
   a. There is a preference for more concrete replicas among children who are less advanced in dramatic play (children who are young or who have had a limited background with imaginative play). For children who are at this point in development, realistic toys are more conducive to imitative play than more abstract or undefined objects like blocks, sticks, pieces of material, etc. However, if teachers were to provide only realistic objects, these children would have little opportunity to develop the ability to use less representational objects.
   b. Among children who are more advanced in symbolic play some availability of less-defined play objects is desirable. These objects are more versatile in what they can be, which allows for open-ended possibilities in the child's play. Equally important, the child is able to wean himself from the literal, reality-bound to the more representational use of objects. When a realistic replica is not available, the representational demand on the child is greater.
   c. For children who can handle the representational demand of the "abstract" play object, such as a block for an iron, realistic props serve the purpose of providing a stimulus to engage in dramatic play in the first place and to engage in playing along particular themes. That is, if a fireman hat is available, children are more likely to seize on the idea of role-playing about firemen.

These 3 points suggest 2 implications:
1. Not all play objects made available would be at the same level of realism/structure.
2. The representational level of the play objects would not be expected to be the same throughout the year, since the children are changing.

From: Copple, C., Siegel, I.E., and Saunders, R. Educating the Young Thinker: Classroom strategies for Cognitive Growth. New York: Van Nostrand, 1979.

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TRANSITION INTO THE AIM PROGRAM

Transition planning is an important consideration for all children entering the AIM program. For many children, the AIM program is their first experience with school. Other children need to make adjustments as they enter AIM from different community-based or private day programs. Most children from the Early Intervention program "graduate" to the AIM program when they reach three years of age. For all children, transitional planning is of great importance.

For children entering AIM from Early Intervention, transition planning means arranging classroom visits prior to full-time attendance. Visits are arranged to allow the child, as well as parents, to familiarize themselves with the classroom and its operation. Weekly attendance may begin on a limited basis at first, but increases to four days per week within the first few weeks. All students eventually participate in the program the full four days per week. Full participation is one of the basic premises of the AIM program, since children will best benefit from the program if they are able to fully and consistently participate.

TRANSIT.DEC

ASSESSMENT IN A.I.M.

Assessment is an on-going, integral part of the AIM program for several reasons. Testing is the basis for determining children's eligibility for the preprimary impaired component of AIM. On-going evaluation also provides a benchmark for students' developmental progress. Assessment results are an important measure of the program's success and usefulness. Most importantly, the nature of the AIM program allows for assessment of children in the most naturalistic of contexts: play with other children. In the case of infants and toddlers, evaluations are completed in the home for this reason.

Evaluations are completed for different purposes within the AIM program. Formal evaluations are not completed without parent's knowledge. Results of evaluation are shared with parents, and used for educational planning for children. Here are some examples of different types of testing that occur in the AIM program.

Project Find Referrals

Project Find is a state-wide program which identifies children, birth through age six, who are suspected of being disabled in various areas of development. Impairments may exist in speech-language development, fine or gross motor skills, social/emotional skills, or cognitive skills. There may be a visual, hearing, physical, or other health impairment. Project Find referrals are generally made by parents, but may also come from other community sources such as public health nurses, doctors, social workers, Head Start personnel, etc. Children referred through Project Find are evaluated by a multidisciplinary evaluation team, which may consist of a preprimary impaired teacher, teacher consultant, speech-language pathologist, psychologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, social workers, or other related professionals. The team members are assigned based upon the needs of the child. Evaluation procedures follow special education guidelines, which state that testing must be completed and an Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) meeting held within 30 school days. An IEP meeting is held with parents to discuss a child's present level of performance, eligibility for services, placement options, and programming. If you suspect your child has a disabling condition that warrants further evaluation, please contact the Project Find Coordinator at (313) 852-4443 to discuss referral procedures.

Section 504 Referrals

Section 504 is a relatively new consideration in school programming. The law addresses those children who do not qualify as disabled under special education categories. However, these children have an educationally handicapping condition that limits their ability to benefit from regular classroom instruction without some accommodations being made. Some examples of Section 504 conditions include asthma, attention deficit disorder, etc. In this case, Section 504 programming may follow special education testing. Other testing for Section 504 eligibility may include teacher's observations, medical information, and parent input.

Head Start Testing

Children who participate in the Head Start component of AIM are referred from community sources. Although testing is not completed prior to Head Start admission, each child is tested twice yearly to monitor developmental progress. Avondale Head Start teachers utilize the Denver Developmental Screening to assess children's skills in different developmental areas. This testing is completed individually with children in the classroom, at the beginning and ending of the school year. Head Start personnel review testing results with parents following evaluation. If concerns are noted, Head Start teachers can refer children for further testing through special education. Parents are notified for referrals for special education testing, and signed parental consent is required prior to any testing being completed. For further information regarding Head Start testing procedures in Avondale, please contact Head Start instructors at (313) 852-4443.

HUMANISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

Emotional impairment is a real handicap.

If you are serious about wanting to cope with emotionally impaired children, you must be willing to address yourself to "emotional deconditioning?"

"Getting even" may be "coping", but it's NOT education.

A humanistic responsibility of education professionals is to help the emotionally impaired child recognize that change of style is possible without sacrifice of self.

Labels don't tell the story.

Poker players need to rely on bluffing; teachers don't.

Trust is the ability to recognize events as natural consequences.

Education professionals can't afford to be "collectors of injustices".

Expecting the child not to upset the teacher is nothing short of role reversal.

BEHAVIORISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

Most behavior is learned. This is true of both desirable and undesirable behavior.

Attention, regardless of intention, can be a very powerful reinforcer.

People are unique; therefore, responses to their behavior must be unique as well.

Rewarded behavior is likely to be repeated, consistently punished behavior is not, but.....

All to often, the benefits of "modeling" are ignored and even forfeited.

One way to improve behavior is to "catch them being good".

Behavior is affected by environment to varying degrees. Environment can be an antagonist or an ally.

Telling a child what he shouldn't do doesn't tell him what he should do.

Baselining enables success recognition, leading to more satisfaction and less guilt.

BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PROCEDURES AND PRECEPTS FOR AIM

≈All staff need to be positive behavioral coachers at all times for all kids. However, there are behavioral situations which must be addressed.

≈Staff needs to keep in mind that most behavior intervention techniques have escalation in severity as a consequence; awareness of the next step on the continuum is important.

≈Staff consistency is imperative. That is, if "ignoring" is the plan, ALL STAFF must ignore according to plan.

≈Staff, as individuals, need to deal with personal feelings about behavior, management and resolve difficulties with it. Staff development activities will be available to help facilitate this.

STAFFING AND BEHAVIORAL PLAN

≈Staffing will be held on each child.
≈Every staff in the program is expected to attend and be involved.
≈Behaviors (positive and negative) the child exhibits will be identified and recorded.
≈A behavioral plan (complete with techniques to be used by all staff) will be developed and written at the staffing.

Staffing and Behavioral Plan is a 3-part cooperative for the child's benefit:

1 - staff/plan in the building
2 - staff/plan with the parent
3 - include parental follow-up at home.

≈A continuum of interventions for each child who exhibits need for intervention beyond Level 1 will be charted.
≈Periodic reviews of progress (with parents) will be conducted.
≈Behavior Management Inservice to parents will be available.

OBSERVABLE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

All of these behaviors have been and can be observed daily in the AIM classrooms. In many instances these are low incidence, developmental behaviors which children "try on" occasionally and give up with mild teacher intervention. With the addition of more severe Pre-Primary Impaired children, these behaviors have increased, and are not amenable to one or two rule-reminders. Many of these behaviors will not disappear with maturation, but are the result of handicaps which require consistent intervention from all staff members in order to be modified.

GROUP A. GROUP DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS:

___ Talking loudly, talking out of turn continuously.
___ Touching others inappropriately but not hurting (poking lightly, grabbing others, pushing, lying on others, inappropriate hugging, kissing, stroking).
___ Does not join the group at all but plays quietly by self.
___ Does not join the group at all but engages in disruptive actions (moving around the room, knocking over toys, talking or making loud noises).
___ Continuously calls attention to extraneous actions or occurrences.

GROUP B. DANGERS TO SELF:

___ Leaves the room unannounced.
___ Leaves the school unannounced.
___ Engages in dangerous play (running in group, hallway; climbing furniture not designed to safely be climbed on.
___ Utilizes toys/school materials in a dangerous manner (puts inappropriate things in mouth; pokes at eyes; attempts to cut self; puts things in nose, eyes, ears).
___ Moves in a dangerous fashion (knocks into things; pushes others; is unbalanced; is careless of what is underfoot).
___ Runs from group outside into street or parking lot.
___ Temper tantrums dangerously (falls down, kicks, flails out).
___ Is self-abusive (bits self, hits self, bangs head).

GROUP C. DANGERS TO OTHERS:

___ Hits others.
___ Pushes others down.
___ Knocks others over.
___ Kicks others.
___ Kicks, hits, or knocks over toys in anger or frustration so that they hurt others.

___ Takes toys from other children, causing a fight.
___ Throws objects in play.
___ Runs riding toys into others.
___ Knocks over chairs or heavy equipment when angry.
___ Pokes others with sharp objects.
___ Spits on others (health hazard).
___ Pinches others.
___ Bites others.
___ Falls or steps on others.
___ Breaks equipment so that it becomes dangerous.
___ Semi-constant screaming (may or may not be damaging to others' hearing; is certainly disruptive to learning).

AIM CONTINUUM OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS

LEVEL 1:

___ A. IGNORING;
1. Ignoring the child. (ex. A child refuses to join the group, but is not disruptive, the teacher chooses to ignore the child.)
2. Ignoring the behavior. (ex. A child is kicking the teacher under the table, but is appropriately engaged in activity. The teacher chooses to ignore the kicking.)

___ B. VERBAL INTERVENTION (TEACHING TECHNIQUES)
1. Rule reminder.
2. Premacking (arranging a consequence). (ex. A child is not listening to a story, the teacher states, as soon as we read the story we can go to the playroom.)
3. Positive replacement of behavior. (ex. Teacher states, "I am giving turns to children who have their hands flat on the table in front of them." or "The quietest child will be the leader today.")
4. Discussing the consequences of the behavior with other children. (ex. "Tell Johnny how it make you feel when he took your toy.")

LEVEL 2:

___ C. PHYSICAL INTERVENTION (TEACHING TECHNIQUES)
1. Physical proximity to teacher. (ex. Teacher moves next to child, holds child's hand companionably, allows child to sit in lap, places hand lightly on child's shoulder.)
2. Positive replacement of behavior. (ex. Teacher asks child to play with her, asks child to accomplish a task or hold a position of responsibility - first in line, go get or carry something for teacher, help a younger or less able child.)
3. Modeling appropriate behaviors. (ex. Teacher covers her own mouth to indicate quiet, praises other children who are acting appropriately.)
4. Removing dangerous or misused objects or toys until child can agree on and/or demonstrate appropriate usage.
5. Physical calming techniques. (ex. Rubbing back or forehead, slow rocking, soothing voice, firm pressure top to bottom either side of spinal column.)

6. Asking child to choose another area to play in and watching to be sure they go.
7. Asking child to sit in a chair until able to state rule broken and assure teacher they will not continue problem behavior.
8. Natural consequences: i.e. child hits other. Other hits him back.

LEVEL 3:

___ PHYSICAL MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

1. Keeping child from engaging in a liked activity because of a contingency. (ex. Teacher states "Children who finish small group activity may go to the playroom." Child does not engage in activity, therefore, does not go to the playroom.)
2. Placing child in chair and sitting next to them until they are calm, can restate rule. State contingency, "when you can tell me _____, then you may get up."
3. Holding child lightly in chair after requesting they sit there, so that they may learn this behavior, always restating the contingency - "as soon as you are quiet you may get up."
4. Holding severely tantrumming child in lap with arms restrained until calm, again restating contingency quietly.
5. Restitution - Clean up the mess made by you; misuse of materials.

LEVEL 4:

After pursuing above interventions for a specified length of time, if behavior continues, changes in program which might include;

≈Changing/lessening of school hours, when behaviors are time-related, such as at the end of the day, the end of the session, etc.
≈Asking parents to assist in management in classroom.
≈Short exclusion from program.
≈Consider more restrictive placement possibilities.

Notes from:

THE CASE FOR MIXED-AGE GROUPING IN EARLY EDUCATION

Lilian G. Katz, Demetra Evangelou, and
Jeanette Allison Hartman
National Association for the education of Young Children
Washington, D.C., 1991

What is mixed-age grouping?

Mixed-age grouping is placing children who are at least a year apart in age into the same classroom groups. Historically mixed-age grouping has been used in different ways and for different purposes in a variety of settings. Montessori thought that younger children could learn from older models. British Infant Schools during the 60's and 70's taught 5, 6, and 7-year-olds in the same classes. Mixed-age grouping has been common in small rural schools for economic and population reasons for many years. Cross-age tutoring has been used for hundreds of years in one way or another.

Modern use of mixed-age grouping has had a variety of names - heterogeneous grouping, multi-age grouping, vertical grouping, family grouping, and primary school un-graded or non-graded classes. There is a distinction between the rationale for non-graded schools and for mixed-age grouping. Non-graded schools are intended to homogenize groups for instruction by ability and developmental level rather than by age. Mixed-age grouping is intended to optimize what can be learned when children of different - as well as the same - ages and abilities have opportunities to interact. Although cross-age tutoring is not identical with mixed-age grouping, it too takes advantage of different competencies in children of different ages or abilities as they work in pairs.

Why should educators employ mixed-age grouping?

Mixed-age grouping is more natural - family units typically include heterogeneous grouping. This may ease the emotional transition from home to school in some children. Children tend to spontaneously create heterogeneous groups in play. The wider range of competencies in a mixed-age group, the greater will be the participants' opportunities to match, complement, or supplement their own needs and styles in their social relationships.

What are the disadvantages of single-age grouping?

Current concern with developmental grouping versus chronological age grouping stems from a widespread use of a formal academic curriculum. Academic approaches can be thought of as homogeneous treatments that yield homogeneous results only if the population it treats is homogeneous in all relevant aspects.

The effect of homogeneous treatments of either age or developmental level can be to penalize children who don't meet expectations. In

a uni-dimensional classroom, the "absence of alternative definitions of what constitutes valued work prevents each student from choosing the definition that most enhances the self." (Rosenholtz, S.J., and Simpson, C. *"Classroom Organization and Student Stratification."* Elementary School Journal, 85 (1), 1984 p. 21-37.) Therefore a larger number of children is "forced to accept low self-evaluations" than would be the case in multi-dimensional classes.

What are the advantage of mixed-age grouping?

Mixed-age grouping in classes that employ an informal intellectually-oriented (versus academic) curriculum can minimize the pitfalls of both kinds of segregation - by age or by readiness. When classes are mixed-age, a wider range of behavior is likely to be accepted and tolerated by peers and teachers than in a same-age group. In mixed-age grouping, teachers' tendencies to teach all children the same lesson at the same time are reduced. It may be easier for kindergarten and preschool teachers to resist the "push-down" phenomenon - the trend to introduce the primary school curriculum into preschool classes. Because mixed-age grouping invites cooperation and other forms of pro-social behavior, and appears to minimize competitive pressures on children, discipline problems that seem inherent in competitive environments are often substantially reduced. The classroom culture in a mixed-age group is more likely to be characterized by helpfulness and magnanimity on the part of those able and expected to assist those who are less able. The mixture of ages may increase teachers' awareness of developmental discrepancies within a particular child.

A mixture of ages within a class can be particularly desirable for children functioning below age-group norms. These children may find it less stressful to interact with younger peers in areas in which they lag behind. Such interactions with younger peers can enhance children's motivation and self-confidence. Mixed-age grouping elicits specific pro-social behaviors such as helping, sharing, and taking turns. It provides older children with leadership opportunities which may be especially important for some "at-risk" children, and provide younger children with opportunities for more complex pretend play than they could initiate themselves.

While more research is needed, modeling of more complex cognitive tasks by older children seems to facilitate cognitive growth in younger children, while "teaching" previously learned skills reinforces cognitive development in older children.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The administrative responsibilities of both Head Start and special education are assigned to a single administrator, the Director of Special Services. This singular supervision of both programs is seen as most valuable to Avondale Integrated Model (A.I.M.) operation as it provides a universal and common basis in every respect. For example, this allows a single, consistent set of administrative expectations and procedures, communication style, philosophy, and support for both Head Start and special education. This singular administrator advantage has provided a solid basis of stability upon which AIM depends in both day-to-day operations and management of grants, rules, and regulations.

The director's background is varied, yet reflects education, knowledge, experience, and dedication to early childhood, curriculum development, and exceptionality as well as administrative practice.

The director's major role in the AIM program is that of facilitator, providing strong support of the AIM program and staff as they work together as an interactive high performance work team for kids. Such supportive facilitation includes team building, staff development, open communication, activating parents, curriculum development, individualization of program for kids, and risk-taking.

Administrative responsibilities include both program and staff evaluation. Since staff credentials, union affiliation, and salary/hourly pay schedules are all variables, evaluation of staff utilizes two different evaluation processes. All staff is evaluated yearly.

AIM staff cohesion and teamwork are vital to the success of the program. This staff demonstrates daily how a diverse group of dedicated educators can overcome individual differences to become a high performance work team. Ongoing attention to open communication, organizational development, problem solving, and teamwork strategies is continuous. In this third successful year of AIM, these skills are internalized and automatic in daily operations, rather than being overt directives by which staff operates. The administrative role in this is to coach, participate openly, share, and support.

The first year of AIM had some difficult spots, as seven diverse individuals with varied backgrounds, levels of education, and experience struggled to find common denominators and interpersonal roles which propelled staff and program toward its common goal: providing highest quality, integrated programming for AIM students. Then administrative emphasis was a bit different from today as the administrator's expectations, direction, and support were insistent of staff and program growth toward cohesion and teamwork. Weekly

integration skills. Thus, in three years, the administrator's role has evolved into the coach/supporter, as staff has become that super work team. Most day-to-day operational management is now done by the AIM team itself with the director's support and availability. That support includes multi-daily contacts with all AIM staff, informal drop-ins to the AIM rooms to interact with the children, deliver a message or just enjoy what's happening. It's a way parents learn to feel comfortable with the director of the program, and the director's workday is brightened.

Rules and regulations of both Head Start and special education are followed meticulously, as audits and monitoring by both programs reveal. While daily program operation is totally integrated, requirements of both programs are maintained on paper as totally separated entities with a common director. The special education part of AIM received 100% on its last state department on-site audit; the Head Start part of AIM is likewise very compliant. The fact that both federal programs' rules and regulations are met outstandingly well, yet operationally are fully integrated, is a credit to the program, and the creativity and dedication by the entire staff as well as the Head Start grantor and special education compliance.

Equally important are AIM parents' role and expectations, as they themselves are integrated, positive, enthusiastic, participative and supportive. They, too, <u>expect</u> this program to work, and celebrate the fact it does, for all their children.

If you are interested in additional information, you may contact the director who will be pleased to answer your questions:

Director of Special Services
Avondale School District
260 S. Squirrel Road
Auburn Hills, Michigan 48326
Phone: 313 - 852-4443

EXCERPTS FROM LETTER WRITTEN BY LIBBY CHALIFOUX, EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HEAD OAKLAND LIVINGSTON HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY

Letter addressed to:

Dr. James Bird, Superintendent
Avondale School District

As the grantee for and administrator of Oakland County's Head Start programs, I would like to complement Avondale Schools on its innovative AIM program, which integrates the district's preprimary impaired students with Head Start children. My staff and I have observed AIM sessions on numerous occasions and we are impressed by the teachers' abilities and dedication. The classrooms and activities available to children are inviting and well managed.

We, in Head Start, have been proud to be a part of the AIM program while, at the same time, fulfilling our own unique mission to service children and families. I wish AIM continued success and commend Avondale Schools' commitment to providing the community with excellent preschool experiences for its children.

Signed: Libby Chalifoux

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ABOUT AVONDALE SCHOOLS

The Avondale School District is located in four of the fastest growing municipalities in Michigan's Oakland County: Bloomfield Township and the cities of Auburn Hills, Rochester Hills and Troy. The 3,000 student district consists of the Administration Building/Early Childhood Center, Avondale High School, Avondale Middle School, and Auburn, Graham, Deerfield and Stiles elementaries. Avondale's 1,500 staff members have a strong reputation throughout the county as being dedicated, concerned professionals. A five-year curriculum plan is in place to ensure each major subject area undergoes a process of review, development and implementation.

Communi . support is illustrated through the approval of two bond progra.s in the past four years. The programs have resulted in re:ovations at each school, the construction of a new elementary building and the planned opening of a new intermediate facility in September, 1994. A community education department offers residents a variety o nrichment and recreational programs.

AVONDALE'S MISSION STATEMENT

"In pa nership with students, families and community members, the Avondale School District will develop socially responsible students who ffectively communicate and solve problems."

AVONDALE VISION STATEMENT

"The Avondale School District shares with the family and the community the responsibility for preparing young people to meet the obligations, needs and challenges of life. This preparation includes understanding the rights of others, appreciating fully the privileges and responsibilities of a democracy, as well as, developing wholesome attitudes, cultural appreciations, academic and vocational skills and the social, physical, mental and moral aspects of living.

Education is a continuous process. Therefore, the school shall promote the growth of each individual in accordance with one's physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs.

We believe the foregoing will prepare the individual to be a literate, responsible and contributing member of society."

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