



**Curriculum Guide**

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## **Crème de la Crème**<sup>®</sup>

Early Learning Centers of Excellence<sup>®</sup>

The first Crème de la Crème early learning center was established in 1982. Since that time, Crème de la Crème schools have opened across the country. The schools are dedicated to making the most of your child's early years. At Crème de la Crème, we do this by providing the best practices that offer your child exceptional early childhood learning experiences.

We are often asked by parents who are considering enrolling their children in Crème de la Crème about our curriculum and the Crème concept of early learning. Our foundation is based on the premise that the most important years of a child's brain development and learning patterns occur from infancy to age five. Our curriculum and methodology take advantage of the windows of opportunity in these years to give your child the best start toward a lifetime of learning.

## Brain Development

Emerging technology has opened the door to exciting new information about early brain development. Before birth, the brain begins to build the circuitry that will be used for vision, hearing, the baby's heartbeat and breathing. Genetics are in charge. However, according to Dr. Pam Schiller, author and leading expert in early brain development applications, the environment will begin to play a profound role in the brain's structure and capacity the minute the baby is born. Early experiences will forge the wiring foundation for emotional intelligence, thinking skills, language, motor skills, and will refine and enhance the wiring for vision and hearing. The quality, quantity and consistency of stimulation will determine, to a large extent, the number and quality of brain synapses that are formed, as well as how those synapses will function. At Crème, we provide the right environment and the right team to ensure that those early "dirt road connections" become "super highways."

Brain development is non-linear. Many skills overlap and develop simultaneously. There are crucial "windows of opportunity" or developmental timetables that signify when the brain is particularly fertile for learning specific types of learning. These are wiring opportunities. Dr. Schiller says that these windows provide a road map for when certain skills should be introduced and reinforced. For example, the "window of opportunity" for the development of trust is during the first fourteen months of life. Experiences that occur within that timetable will determine whether the baby wires for trust or mistrust. If the baby experiences an environment where his or her needs are met on a regular basis, he or she will wire for trust. If, on the other hand, the

baby's experiences during the first fourteen months are negative, the baby will wire for mistrust. Wiring is flexible for the most part up until puberty, but the further the child grows from the wiring window, and the more repetitive the negative experiences, the less the chance of repair. At Crème, we are mindful of the wiring windows and plan specifically to incorporate the appropriate activities and experiences during these critical times in order to maximize each child's potential for development.

Although the windows of opportunity are the same for all children, their learning styles and ability levels are uniquely different. Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence provides scientific evidence of the existence of multiple ways that individuals express their intellectual abilities. In general, Dr. Gardner's theory states that some individuals demonstrate an affinity for music, others for movement. Some are able to excel in their use and understanding of language while others are better at understanding spatial relationships or human behavior. Still others are good at understanding the patterns of their own behaviors or the patterns of math.

At the same time, individuals show a difference in preference for how they learn. Some of us are great listeners, while others need to see the information or actually manipulate it. These preferences are called learning styles. At Crème, we honor and respect the unique and individual ways in which children learn and the unique and individual ways in which children demonstrate what they know.

## The Curriculum

Our curriculum supports emergent reading, math, science, social studies and character building skills. Enrichment classes in creative movement, art, music, second language and computer enhance these skills by integrating them into meaningful and real life experiences. Though focused on skills, our curriculum addresses the needs of the total-child and his or her physical, intellectual, social and emotional development.

We incorporate activities and use educational materials that are appropriate for the age and developmental stage of each child. Our time-tested, research based educational programs incorporate a variety of engaging and enriching activities that will benefit children throughout their school years.

At Crème de la Crème, we subscribe to critically acclaimed and nationally recognized curriculum for each of our age groups. Additionally, subject specific curriculum is used in the enrichment classrooms.

### **Infant**

The infant program emphasizes a nurturing environment, introducing babies to healthy social and emotional interaction, language acquisition, body awareness, and motor control.

**Innovations: The Comprehensive Curriculum  
Addison Wesley Active Learning Series**

## **Toddler**

In the toddler program, we build on skills learned in the infant program and provide a safe and happy environment for toddlers to become more independent. Problem solving, concept formation, cooperation and self-help skills are also introduced.

### **Innovations: The Comprehensive Curriculum**

Addison Wesley Active Learning Series

## **Preschool**

The preschool program focuses on developing the total-child while nurturing each child's potential, building upon successes and mastered skills. Emphasis is placed on the role that social skills and interactions play in building a foundation for meeting future academic challenges.

### **SRA McGraw-Hill DLM Early Learning Program**

The American School of Protocol's Manners and Etiquette Program

PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Skills) Program

## **Pre-kindergarten**

The pre-k program serves as a precursor to private or public school. This program offers a balance of fun, creative, hands-on activities as well as more traditional, measurable venues of learning.

Modern Curriculum Press Phonics

Modern Curriculum Press Mathematics

SRA Open Court Reading, Real Science

Everyday Mathematics

Scott Foresman Addison Wesley Mathematics

Handwriting Without Tears

PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Skills) Program

The American School of Protocol's Manners and Etiquette Program

## **Private Kindergarten**

The curriculum for the Private Kindergarten program includes emergent reading and language arts/phonics, emergent math, science and social studies.

## **Everyday Mathematics**

## **SRA Open Court Reading**

## **SRA Real Science**

## **Houghton Mifflin Social Studies**

## **Handwriting Without Tears or D'Nealian Handwriting**

At Crème, our educational goal is to develop the total-child. This includes physical skills, social/emotional skills, communications skills and thinking skills. We focus on building self confidence and problem solving. The result—children receive the preparation they need for learning success in a safe, supportive, nurturing and encouraging environment.

## **Physical Development**

We offer opportunities to develop coordination, balance, and agility. We work on developing both the small and large muscles of the body. The brain wires for motor development from birth to 2 years and refines that wiring between 2 and 6 years.

## **Social-Emotional Skills**

Children learn to control their behaviors, build interpersonal relationships, self esteem and self help skills. The brain will wire for social behaviors and emotional intelligence from birth to 4 years. It will refine and strengthen this wiring between 4 and 8 years.

## **Communication Skills**

We build both receptive (listening) and expressive (speaking) language skills. The most fertile time in a child's life for the acquisition of vocabulary is from birth to 5 years. By the time a child is 5 years, he or she possesses three-fifths of his or her vocabulary.

## **Thinking Skills**

Children develop the understanding of cause and effect relationships and practice problem solving in everyday activities. The understanding of cause and effect relationships, the basis for problem solving, wires between birth and eighteen months. Problem solving itself wires between eighteen months and age 4 years.

## Rotations

Children's attention spans are short. They need a constant exchange between passive and active activities. At Crème, children move between enrichment classrooms that work in consort with their ability to maintain attention. Brain development research findings indicate that the brain is more receptive to information and pays closer attention to information when things are new and different. When the brain grows accustomed to a particular activity, or space, it has a tendency to tune it out. It blocks learning. According to Dr. Gold Scheible, former Director of the Brain Research Institute at UCLA, unfamiliar activities are the brain's best friend. Researchers believe that children placed in novel and stimulating environments, but not over-stimulating, are more focused and more likely to process the information they are learning. Our enrichment classrooms are designed to encourage learning.

Dr. Kay Albrecht, author and advocate for quality care and education says that children benefit from a wide variety of experiences: child-initiated, teacher-directed, large group, small group, indoor, outdoor, quiet and active. Crème de la Crème's unique approach to early childhood education offers children all of this in a highly enriched environment.

Children ages 2 and older begin their day in their primary classroom. They are encouraged to select from a menu of child-initiated activities as they socialize with their peers and with their teacher. Choice is a critical component of the Crème classroom. Choices allow children to match their instructional goals with their personal goals and that provides children with a strong motivation to participate. It allows children to feel more positive about their work. Positive feelings result in an increase in body chemicals that in return increase the potential for memory. We certainly want children to remember what they learn.

When children leave their primary classroom to participate in activities in the enrichment rooms, the primary teacher moves with them. This ensures continuity of care and keeps children from feeling stressed. In the enrichment rooms, the children will participate in a teacher-directed lesson lead by the enrichment teachers. Children are allowed to practice and reflect on what they have learned before moving to another room. According to Dr. Pam Schiller, practice and reflection are critical steps in learning. Each step plays a role in assisting the brain in its attempt to process information and store it in long term memory.

## The Crème Teachers

Specializing in Early Childhood Learning

Early interactions with children affect brain wiring. Warm, responsive care appears to have a protective biological function, helping children weather ordinary stresses. The quality of relationships and experiences during the first 3 years has a deep and lasting impact on how the brain gets “wired.” Early wiring of the brain sets the foundation for future development in life. At Crème, our skilled teachers specialize in early childhood learning. They are well prepared to guide children in the building of a solid learning foundation. The primary teachers provide security and continuity of care, while enrichment classroom teachers provide content area expertise. This team teaching combination is core to the Crème de la Crème philosophy and unique in our early childhood learning centers.

## Primary and Enrichment Rooms

Our primary and enrichment classrooms reflect an environment similar to what children will experience in an elementary school setting. Children who experience the Crème environment will find it easier to make the transition to formal school settings later.

Brain development research demonstrates that children become more organized and more fluid in their thinking when learning is integrated. Dr. Schiller says, “Intelligence is the ability to see patterns and build relationships from those patterns. Enrichment classrooms are the perfect way to help children connect learning. They provide real life, meaningful connections for children.”

*The enrichment classrooms that your child will experience include:*

### **Music Studio**

Neurological research indicates that the optimum time for music instruction is between the ages of 3 and 10 years. The Music Studio offers children the opportunity to cultivate an appreciation of music. Play-based musical experiences provide opportunities for singing, moving and listening. Each of these activities helps the brain stay alert and also serves as a stimulus for increasing memory.

### **Coconut Theatre**

Children become literate as they experience telling stories and retelling stories in their own words. They develop an ear for sound as they listen to stories and poems being read. They develop a disposition for reading when their experiences with language develop in a continuum that allows them to internalize concepts within meaningful context and at their own pace. In the Coconut Theatre, children listen to stories with a variety of language patterns, retell stories using flannel boards and puppets, participate in action stories and interact with their peers through dramatic play.

### **Library**

Children are more receptive to language during the first five years of life than they will ever be again. It is the perfect time to introduce a second language. In the Crème Library, children are introduced to second language vocabulary. To enhance the fun, language is taught through stories, finger plays, songs and games.

### **Math and Science Lab**

The brain's favorite activity is problem solving. It is constantly seeking and searching for patterns. In the Math and Science Lab, children have plenty of practice exercising their reasoning skills. Since the brain is wiring for thinking skills between the ages of 4 and 6 years, the exploration activities in this room are a perfect way for children to strengthen the neurological networks that support higher levels of thinking. Children become familiar with patterns within mathematical concepts.

### **KREM/WEE TV**

Children explore science, community, and social studies concepts through dramatic play in the KREM/WEE TV studio. They investigate the role of the newscaster, and can even video themselves delivering a broadcast. They use critical thinking skills to work coopera-

tively with their peers on negotiating and compromising, and participate in activities that develop virtues. The combination of practicing social skills and utilizing critical thinking simultaneously provides a perfect format for the wiring of both skills. The “window of opportunity” for wiring both social skills and thinking skills is between the ages of 2 and 4 years, with opportunities for strengthening of the wiring between ages 4 and 8 years.

### **Art Studio**

In the Art Studio, children are allowed to manipulate a variety of art media and use a variety of art tools. Creativity flourishes between ages 2 and 5 and if it is nurtured and supported, it will become a life long trait. Children will enjoy expressing their creativity with paints, modeling clay, chalks and standard pens, pencils and markers.

### **Computer Lab**

In today’s technology driven environment, children are expected to be computer literate at an early age. They are expected to be able to interact with a variety of different types of software. The Crème Computer Lab provides children with computer instruction and highly interactive software that allows them to practice math, reading and writing skills learned in other classrooms from a technological perspective. For example, children can take concrete concepts learned in math and utilize them in a more symbolic way on the computer screen.

### **Creative Movement Studio**

Children are invited to express their moods, feelings, and thoughts creatively in this classroom. They will develop and refine both gross and fine motor capabilities as they connect their thoughts to their movement. The more senses that deliver messages to the brain, the more likely the brain is to pay attention to the message. Combining movement and thinking maximizes the potential for learning.

### **Gym**

In the Gym, children are engaged in games and activities that encourage them to run, spin, turn, jump, climb, tumble and exercise. Motor development is wired between birth and age 2 and is refined between the ages of 2 and 6 years. How much freedom a child has had to move freely is directly related to their agility and coordination later in life. As an added benefit, children increase their oxygen level as they move and an increase in oxygen ensures an alert state of mind.

## The Facility

Learning-inspired and child-friendly environment

When parents first visit and tour a Crème facility, the most common response is “Wow.” What a fun place for children. As you tour, you will discover that areas have been thoughtfully designed to help the discovery and learning process. Colors and shapes support the child’s development. Areas and furnishings are scaled to a child’s perspective, in order that they feel comfortable, secure and confident.

Our distinctive environment is stimulating and creative, with an aesthetic mix of colors which brain research verifies affects our moods and behaviors. As you walk through the unique Crème facility, you will notice that the pale blue and green colors in the quaint Victorian facades are calming and increase feelings of well-being. Splashes of red are energizing and encourage creativity, while the yellow, off-white and beige colors in the facility and classrooms are optimal for positive feelings and learning.

Another important area of the facility is the Crème kitchen where well-balanced meals are prepared fresh daily. Crème believes that good nutrition is very important to fuel a child’s brain. Snacks are provided throughout the day, including a Travel Treat for the road.

You will notice that our facility is clean and fresh smelling. Classrooms are organized and toys and materials neatly stored. It’s all part of the Crème philosophy to be the best of the best and provide a safe, nurturing and healthy environment for your child every day.

Crème offers a secure, learning-enhanced environment that supports a child’s brain development. Children feel comfortable and confident, both indoors and out. It is a place that is your child’s world rather than the world of an adult. A place where children are able to express themselves while they learn, laugh and play.

## SUGGESTED READING

### *Baby Smarts*

Jackie Silberg. 2009  
Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House

### *Brain Smart Choices*

Dr. Becky Bailey. 2006  
Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House

### *A Good Start in Life: Understanding Your Child's Brain and Behavior*

Norbet Herschkowitz, M.D. 2002  
Washington, DC: The National Academies Press

### *Right From Birth: Building Your Child's Foundation for Life*

Ramey, C.T. & S.L. 1999  
New York: Goddard Press

### *Start Smart, Building Brain Power in the Early Years*

Schiller, Pam. 1999  
Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House

### *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory and Practice*

Gardner. H. 1993  
New York: Basic Books

\* *Pam Schiller, PhD. Information provided  
with permission of Dr. Schiller.*

Crème facilities, curriculum and programs may  
change from time to time and may vary by location.

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