



Frequently Asked Questions at Fun and Friends

1) What is meant by “Child Development, Not Just Child Care”?

While safety, care and concern for your child’s well-being is of primary importance to us, their physical, social and emotional development is nurtured during their time in our center. This is why you will not see our children at our center sitting in front of televisions, passively watching cartoons and movies on a large screen. Instead, we place emphasis on their early childhood development, which is a process that is continually changing and expanding. Therefore both structured and unstructured activities are offered for children. Our basic philosophy is one of freedom to learn, grow and make choices. We believe that children learn through play and we have structured the environment to reflect that belief. Thus, the program is carefully planned and thoughtfully presented throughout the day. Teachers are encouraged to be flexible and to allow the children freedom to learn at their own pace. Occasionally children in the older programs may use carefully selected programs for the classroom computer. However, most of the time they will be “learning through doing”, after all, “play is the work of a child.”

2) I understand that you have an emphasis on literacy, even in the Infant Classrooms. How can you teach an infant to read?

Acquisition of literacy skills is an important function of any high quality early childhood education program and one that we believe in so strongly that we emphasize this in all of our classrooms—even our Infants!! By creating this literacy continuum, all of our children acquire, practice and master reading skills as they progress from one classroom to the next. Our staff in turn, create a supportive literacy environment whereby they strengthen their own professional development in this vital learning/content area.

- A. The 1-2-3 Read Virginia curriculum used in the Dreamers, Lambs and BBBs programs is into the children’s daily lessons. It is designed to build emergent literacy in children birth to age three through carefully planned set of experiences that lay the foundation for reading and writing success. It has proven to result in significant, measurable gains in children’s language and cognitive development.
- B. The Cubs staff introduce math and literacy concepts using materials developed by the same publisher as the OWL program, which is used in Butterflies. **Read Together Talk Together** uses the research-based technique of dialogic reading to expand children’s language and emergent literacy skills. The program helps parents and teachers to have conversations about books with children. By having conversations about books, children’s language expands and literacy skills begin to emerge.
- C. **Opening the World to Learning (OWL)**, used in our Butterflies room, is a comprehensive, integrated curriculum that helps children develop foundational language, academic and social skills in all domains of learning. Family literacy is a critical component of healthy families, schools and communities.

3) Research indicates that the Early Childhood years are prime ones for the acquisition of a second language. Do you include foreign language in your program?

Many preschools offer a foreign language, but very few offer this at *ALL* age levels. At Fun and Friends we have created our own Spanish language program (*and materials!*) and this used in each classroom. Many of our staff are native Spanish speaking and we have taken advantage of this opportunity to introduce the language to our children through music and movement, art activities and games. Often times our teachers will reinforce the lessons by using Spanish words and phrases throughout the children's day at our center.

4) Do you offer any other curriculum/program enrichment?

In addition to the Spanish program, we also offer weekly movement classes. These classes include Yoga, Dance and Soccer for our pre-schoolers and our toddlers participate in a movement class specifically designed to aid in their development of motor skills, balance and coordination. This program is included in the tuition costs. As always, Art and Music are embedded in the program for each level.

5) What is the background and training of your teachers and staff?

Fun and Friends takes great pride in the professionals on staff who dedicate themselves to the development of children. Our directors have advanced degrees in the field of Early Childhood Education and have been at our center for over a combined thirty years! Under their leadership, the center provides professional development opportunities that not only meet or exceed licensing requirements, but are also geared to enhance the pedagogy and instructional practices of our staff. Most recently Fun and Friends have provided the means for our staff to acquire their CDA credentials, improve their English language skills (ESL), and attend special training in the area of literacy. Fun and Friends often partners with George Mason University, Foundations for Families and most recently Catholic Charities in an ongoing effort to support the growth and development of its staff.

6) Why don't the children go off-site for visits and field trips?

We recognize that learning takes place in many ways AND in many places. Transportation and safety concerns notwithstanding, we feel strongly that it is much more developmentally appropriate to bring events to our center rather than to spend the time preparing for and then taking a bus to an off-site program. We contract specialists with programs related to a season or particular theme; storytellers, artists and/or musicians are hired to come to the center for performances and entertainment. At other times, the children may participate in special art and exploration activities that are chosen to enhance experience. Parents are always welcome to attend such events.

