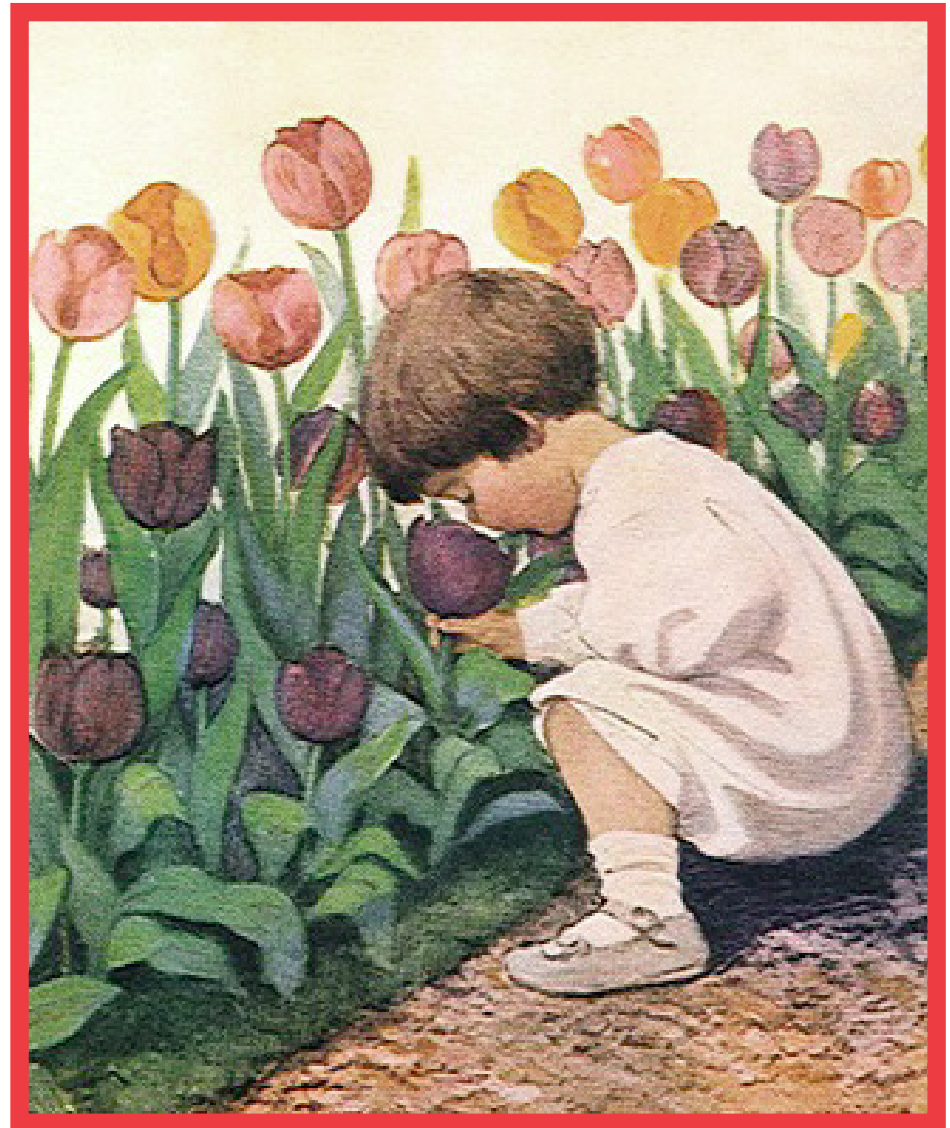


PRESCHOOL

Curriculum
Overview

Sample
Lessons



Thank you for your interest in Oak Meadow. Since 1975, we have been supporting homeschooling families and students, both through our creative curriculum and our internationally-accredited distance learning school.

Introduction

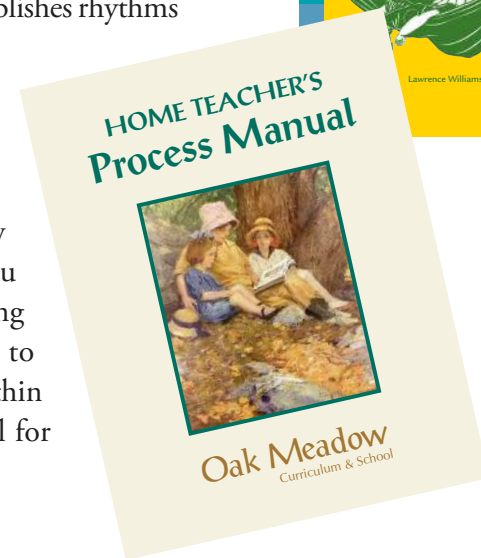
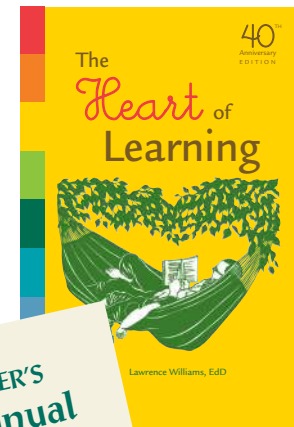
The Preschool course offers an artistic and imaginative perspective on early childhood that introduces you to the dynamic principles of learning, and then shows you how to apply these principles in a variety of learning experiences with your child. The books include nature walks, morning circle, bedtime rituals, sand and water play, singing, finger plays, and storytelling. The entire course is a delight for both parents and children and establishes rhythms of learning that will benefit you and your child throughout the schooling years.

The Oak Meadow Preschool course creates opportunities for parents and children to experience the artistic and imaginative principles that make learning meaningful. In addition, it helps you develop the skills you need to apply these principles with your children. With Oak Meadow Preschool, you can transform your experience of the learning process and help your children express their innate genius.

Written by Lawrence and Bonnie Williams, the Founders of Oak Meadow School, Oak Meadow Preschool is the result of over twenty years' experience with children and the learning process. The essence of the course is presented in two volumes: *The Heart of Learning* and *Learning Processes*; but the course also includes all of the materials necessary to introduce your child to a wide variety of creative learning activities. In *The Heart of Learning*, you will discover the core principles of learning, including cycles of unfoldment, life and form, expansion

and contraction, creative tension, and the important triad of focus, process, and relationship. In *Learning Processes*, you and your child engage in nature walks, morning circle, bedtime rituals, sand and water play, singing, fingerplays, and storytelling. The entire course is a delight for both parents and children, and establishes rhythms of learning that will benefit you and your child throughout the schooling years.

With the Oak Meadow Preschool course, you have the understanding and skills you need to release the miracle within your child. Please call for details.





How to Use this Course

There are two manuals in this course: *The Heart of Learning* and *Learning Processes*. *The Heart of Learning* explains in greater detail why we suggest the processes in this course. We want to help you understand better the needs of your child so that your experience as a parent can be as enjoyable as possible.

It is important that you read the following in *The Heart of Learning* as soon as you receive this course. This will give you the basic understanding necessary to proceed with the course. Read the remainder of *The Heart of Learning* at your leisure, but an understanding of the following sections in *The Heart of Learning* is necessary for a fuller understanding of *Learning Processes*.

“Preface”

“Change and Transformation”

“What is a Child?”

“The Bonding Process”

“Cycles of Unfoldment”

“Shifting the Focus”

“Expansion and Contraction”

Learning Processes contains a description of the many processes that bring fullness and richness to a young child’s life. It is important to read the following before beginning:

“Guidelines for Creative Processes”

“Morning Circle”

“Imitation Activities”

“Creative Play”

“The Bedtime Ritual”

Once you have read these, you are ready to create a daily structure that breathes comfortably with your child’s natural rhythm. The remainder of this introduction describes such a daily structure.

The Structure of a Young Child's Day

The young child needs lots of freedom to explore and express creatively. At the same time, there need to be special moments throughout the day when the parent shifts the focus from expansion to contraction and back again. When a child is contracted or expanded for too long a period of time, he or she becomes restless and irritable. It is very helpful to have a basic outline of a child's day to allow for an easier flow between expansion and contraction. We suggest the following:

- **Breakfast (Expansion):** Have a consistent rising time and breakfast time so your child establishes a rhythm to the day. There will always be exceptions, but generally a child should get up and eat breakfast at about the same time each day.
- **Circle Time (Contraction):** After the child has completed the morning routine of eating and dressing, create a Circle Time to bring about a reverence as well as a bond between parent and child. There is a full description of Circle Time in this manual.
- **Shared Experiences (Alternating Polarities):** After a period of focus, as established during the Circle Time, the child needs to work through his or her will. Will is discussed in *The Heart of Learning* under the section called "Cycles of Unfoldment." This is the perfect time for imitation activities as described in "Imitation Activities" in this manual.
- **Creative Play (Expansion):** Creative play opportunities can finish the morning until it is time to focus again upon lunch. This frees the parent for his or her personal activities.
- **Lunch (Contraction):** Come together with your child to focus on the lunch ritual as described in this manual.
- **Shared Experiences (Alternating Polarities):** After the lunch period is a good time for a special activity. There are many to choose from in this manual. The important consideration is that you share the experience with your child. Remember it does not need to take all afternoon, and you both need time to be separately engaged in your own activities.
- **Creative Play (Expansion):** Creative play activities give both of you some independent time.
- **Evening Meal (Contraction):** Come together for the evening meal ritual.
- **Creative Play (Expansion):** More creative play.
- **Bedtime Ritual (Contraction):** The bedtime ritual is a special time to share with your child. Bedtime should be a set time each day, and your child will look forward to it. Many of the bedtime struggles are eliminated with this ritual. In addition to spending an hour with your child at bedtime, you are giving yourself several personal hours for the rest of the evening. A child who goes off to sleep peacefully does not usually wake up and demand more attention.

Read the remainder of both manuals slowly and thoughtfully so you can digest the material at your own pace. You will probably want to read over the material at least twice if it is new to you.



Chapter 1

Guidelines for Creative Processes

In choosing activities as focal points for the experience of process, it makes a tremendous difference what we choose to focus upon. Parents and children have always done “creative arts” together, and there are countless books available that demonstrate how to do an infinite number of crafts projects. Any of these projects could be used as a focus for a process, but some are more beneficial than others. It is important to know which kinds of activities provide greater opportunities for a deeper experience and which are extremely limited in the opportunities they offer.

Of course, here we are talking about outer activities, which are only part of what goes into a meaningful learning experience. Although it is certainly important that we choose activities that offer greater opportunities for expression, we must never forget that the real key to the success or failure of any such experience between parent and child lies within the parent, and not within the project.

If the parent is truly capable of entering into a process with his or her child, any activity will do, including the most mundane, for it is the amount of loving awareness flowing through the parent and child which determines the depth they will experience, and not the specific activity they engage in. Each of us sometimes struggles with pouring ourselves wholeheartedly into activities with our children, and we are not always filled with love or awareness. Therefore, we must consider what kinds of activities are more helpful than others. Certain kinds of activities actually have the ability to draw parents and children into a deeper experience, even when they’re not feeling up to it, while other activities, by their very nature, seem to thwart the very possibility of deeper

experience. There are several components which are common to activities that provide opportunities for deeper expression. Some activities have all of these elements, while others have only one or two. Having more of these components does not necessarily make it a better activity than those with fewer of them, but for an activity to offer real opportunities for deeper expression, it must have at least one of these elements present:

• *The Activity Is Rhythmical*

This must be understood in a broad sense, and does not mean the activity must include drums beating in the background, or only involve singing and dancing. Rhythm has to do with the repetition of a particular motion numerous times, eventually resulting in a finished activity. This includes such activities as knitting, sewing, weaving, singing, dancing, swinging and running. The repetition of a particular action creates an opportunity for focus not available in other, more erratic activities. It offers the mind and body an activity which is steady, consistent, and non-threatening (because it is familiar), and this permits them to become still. This allows the heart, which is the gateway to the experience of process, to open. In activities that are not rhythmical, the mind is faced with having to constantly make a new decision, and this keeps the attention focused in the analytical mind, rather than freeing it to become poised and still.

• *The Activity Is Creative*

This includes such activities as clay modeling, painting and drawing, building with blocks, and playing with sand or water. In these activities, there is a flexible medium present which allows the child to give form to an inner impulse. Such an activity widens and strengthens the channel between the child’s inner nature and his or her physical expression. This enables the child to more fully express his or her innate abilities through the physical manipulation of materials.

It is important to mention the significance of the particular medium which is used in the creative process, for this influences the nature of the experience. As we mentioned before, if the parent is capable of entering fully into the experience of the process, any medium can be used. However, since we are

all limited in this respect, it is helpful to use a medium which tends to encourage, rather than discourage, a deeper experience. Generally, media which are softer and more receptive (poetically speaking) tend to be more conducive to a deeper experience than those that are harsh and brittle. Usually, this corresponds to natural instead of artificial materials. For example, if you are doing a modeling project, clay or homemade bread dough would be better than commercial Play-doh. If you are drawing, crayons generally are more flexible than magic markers. Natural colors are more conducive to a deeper expression than “day-glo” colors, and wood is more “alive” than plastic.

• ***The Activity Embodies Archetypes***

The concept of archetypes was originally formulated by Plato, and basically suggests that all physical forms and activities are actually reflections of deeper realities (which Plato called archetypes), in much the same way as the image we see in a mirror is not the reality itself, but a reflection of that reality. By observing the events that occur in the world from this perspective, we can begin to understand and experience the deeper realities that lie behind these forms. We will go into greater depth about the concept of archetypes in the section on storytelling, so if you wish to read more about them now, turn to that section.

These are the three important elements of a creative process. If a process contains these components there is a very good chance the activity will be both beneficial and enjoyable for the parent and the child. Even with the very best activity, the most important aspect of any process is the amount of focused responsiveness which exists between the parent and the child, because this is what creates a sensitive relationship and opens the door for deeper communication.

Chapter 6

Nature Walk

Go for a walk in a natural setting with your child. This area may be on the beach, in the woods, along a creek, in the mountains, or any other natural area. If you live in a very large city and there are no natural areas nearby, then go to a park, but try to choose an area that is not crowded with people. The idea is to be in a place that is not surrounded by all of the distractions that usually assault you every day.

Walk for about an hour. You don't need to walk briskly, and you don't need to see how far you can walk. As far as your child is concerned, there is no “purpose” to the walk; you are just “going for a walk” together. While you are walking, keep your attention, (and your child's), focused upon the sights and sounds around you, and not upon other things, such as conversations about what happened yesterday or what you are planning to do tomorrow. As much as possible, try to use all of your bodily senses: sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing. Touch trees. Feel the bark, the roots, the leaves, the berries. Listen to the sound of the wind, the birds, and the bees. Look at the shapes of flowers, seeds and leaves. Smell the earth, the grass, the flowers and the sap on the trees. Try to experience nature through all of your senses, and help your child do the same.

Don't try to make a big issue of “paying attention,” or it will tend to make the walk rather tiresome for both you and your child. Whenever something comes up that begins to move away from the intention, just “shift the focus,” as described in *The Heart of Learning*. The only exception to this rule is if your child feels compelled to talk about something which has been bothering him or her. Then allow him or her to express what is felt, but don't go into laborious mental questionings. Just allow it to come out, acknowledge your child's thoughts and feelings, and then shift the focus to something tangible and present.



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