

Project Construct

What Is Project Construct?

Project Construct is an approach to teaching that is based on what we know about learning. Project Construct incorporates curricular goals and assessment tools that are linked to state and national standards that reflect current knowledge about how children learn and develop.

Project Construct is derived from constructivism—the view that learners construct knowledge through interactions with their physical and social environments. The Project Construct approach to teaching is a rigorous, contextualized, problem-based, and learner-centered pedagogy that encourages students to hypothesize and predict, pose questions, defend and revise ideas, and research answers, as well as to imagine, investigate, and invent. Through “hands-on, minds-on” learning experiences, students in Project Construct classrooms attain deep understandings in the core content areas. They also learn to work collaboratively with adults and peers and learn to be lifelong problem solvers.

In addition, the Project Construct approach is consistent with developmentally appropriate practices. A substantial body of research indicates that implementing developmentally appropriate practices results in positive student outcomes.

The Project Construct goals for students and curriculum frameworks are also linked with the Missouri Early Learning Standards. Educators implementing Project Construct can be sure they are preparing children for the high expectations they will encounter as they progress through school.

Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

The Project Construct early childhood curriculum and assessment is built around a set of goals for students that reflect current theory and research. These goals, which are listed below, represent critical learning outcomes for students in early childhood programs, and are consistent with Missouri’s Early Learning Standards.

The goals are organized by four interrelated domains rather than by traditional subject areas because young children do not categorize experiences in the same way older children and adults do. In this way, the foundations for academic learning are embedded in the social and physical environments and integrated into contexts that are meaningful to young children and appropriate to their stages of development.

Sociomoral Domain: Social and Personal Development

Social Development

- Build relationships of mutual trust and respect with adults

- Build relationships of mutual trust and respect with peers
- Consider the perspectives of others >
- Cooperate and collaborate as a member of learning community

Personal Development

- Be inquisitive
- Take initiative
- Be Confident
- Be inventive
- Be reflective

Cognitive Domain: Mathematics and Scientific Thinking

Mathematical Thinking

- Develop logical thinking
- Develop numerical thinking reasoning
- Develop geometric, spatial and temporal reasoning
- Analyze data
- Exchange mathematical ideas

Scientific Thinking

- Increase Knowledge of physical world
- Develop and apply scientific reasoning
- Exchange scientific ideas

Represent Domain: Language Development

Language Development

- Develop effective listening skills and speaking abilities
- Develop as a reader
- Develop as a writer
- Use language to communicate in a variety of ways for different purposes and audiences
- Gather and comprehend information from a variety of sources

Symbolic Expression

- Represent ideas and feelings through pretend play
- Represent ideas and feelings through movement
- Represent ideas and feelings through music
- Represent ideas and feelings through art and construction
- Recognize that symbolic expression has social, cultural, and historical contexts

Physical Development Domain: Motor Development

Motor Skills

- Develop motor skills for personally meaningful purposes

Health and safety

- Develop healthy living practices

What does a Project Construct classroom look like?

In a Project Construct classroom, each child is valued and respected, both as a learner and as a person. Educators using Project Construct support children's development as individuals, as learners, and as members of a classroom community.

Along with a thorough understanding of curriculum (what children need to know and be able to do each grade level), teachers in Project Construct classrooms

- use students' interests to motivate and engage them in learning
- encourage children to collaborate and work together
- allow children to take initiative, express opinions and make choices
- view children's errors as learning opportunities
- assess children's thinking, as well as their work, in order to teach more effectively

Project Construct teachers also believe that the classroom environment is an important tool for helping children learn. Room arrangements and daily schedules, while carefully designed, are flexible. Student work is on display everywhere, signaling to students that the room belongs to them. There are tables for children to work together in groups and individual spaces for independent work.

While Project Construct teachers each have their own ways of involving students in the subject matter, you can be sure of one thing; they all believe that high expectations and rich learning environments challenge students to reach their maximum potential.

The Project Construct learning environment reflects the curriculum. Therefore, it should provide opportunities for children to make choices, to solve problems, to collaborate, and to be responsible members of the classroom community. The arrangement of the room, the materials, and the equipment should also be safe, orderly, and developmentally appropriate.

The learning environment includes

- adequate space for developmentally appropriate learning activities
- a carpeted area for the whole class to meet together

- places for two children or a small group to meet or work together
- places where children can be alone
- noisy areas separated from quiet areas
- enough space for active play
- places to display children's creations
- storage space for children's personal items, such as backpacks and clothing
- space for teacher storage of classroom supplies and personal items
- space and equipment for outdoor play

The classroom is arranged in learning centers with well-defined spaces for center activities. The number and type of centers differ for each class and are often changed during the year according to the teacher's curricular decisions and in response to children's needs, as well as their self-initiated, spontaneous interests and ideas.

Typical learning centers may be block construction, pretend play, art, sensory activities, fine motor games, math games, literacy, science, listening, and music.

The learning centers should provide the children with opportunities to

- explore and experiment
- problem solve,
- make decisions and choices
- investigate personal interests
- role play
- create
- interact with one another
- interact with the teacher

Schedules

To meet the needs and interests of young children the daily schedule offers a balance between child-initiated and teacher-initiated learning experiences, relatively free movement activities and more restricted, quieter activities, individualized, small-group, and large-group activities. In addition, the schedule is built upon careful consideration of the young child's needs for nutrition, bathroom breaks, rest, and vigorous exercise.

Most of the day is devoted to active "hands-on, minds-on" learning experiences such as journal writing, shared-reading time, story time, science experiments, art activities, pretend play, outdoor free play, dance or movement experiences, physical knowledge activities, construction, board/card games, or puzzles. A minimal part of the day should be devoted to large-group, teacher-initiated activities or direct instruction.