SOFTWARE & TECH

Creative Curriculum For Preschool Intentional Teaching Cards

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Unlocking Early Learning Success: A Deep Dive into the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Intentional Teaching Cards

In the dynamic world of early childhood education, educators are constantly seeking tools that balance structured learning with the natural curiosity of young children. The **Creative Curriculum for Preschool Intentional Teaching Cards**have emerged as a powerful resource designed to do exactly that. These cards are more than just lesson plans; they are a meticulously crafted system that helps teachers make every teaching moment purposeful, engaging, and developmentally appropriate. For preschool teachers, directors, and curriculum coordinators, understanding how to leverage these cards can transform a classroom from a place of simple activity into a rich environment of intentional discovery. This article explores the philosophy behind the cards, their practical applications, and how they support the whole child across all learning domains.

What Are the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Intentional Teaching Cards?

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, developed by Teaching Strategies, is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that focuses on project-based investigations and play-based learning. At the heart of its daily implementation lie the **Intentional Teaching Cards** (ITCs). These cards are a set of over 200 individual, laminated cards, each containing a complete, small-group or large-group learning experience. They are aligned with the curriculum's major objectives and developmental progressions, covering areas such as literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and physical development.

Unlike generic activity ideas, each Intentional Teaching Card is crafted to be **intentional**— meaning it has a clear focus on a specific learning goal or skill. Every card includes a specific teaching strategy a step-by-step procedure, suggested vocabulary, and ways to adapt the experience for different learners. This structure gives teachers the confidence to deliver high-quality instruction without spending hours searching for ideas or struggling to align an activity with developmental standards.

The Core Components of an Intentional Teaching Card

Each card typically includes the following key elements:

- Objective: A clear statement of the developmental goal (e.g., "Develops ability to recognize and name uppercase letters").
- Materials: A concise list of needed items, usually low-cost or found in a typical classroom.
- Vocabulary: Key words to introduce and use during the activity, supporting language development.
- Teaching Sequence: A step-by-step guide on how to present the activity, including questions to ask.
- Differentiation: Strategies to support children at various developmental levels, from those needing extra support to those ready for a challenge.
- Home–School Connection: A simple idea for families to extend learning at home.

This consistent format empowers both new and veteran teachers to focus on meaningful interactions with children rather than on planning logistics.

How Intentional Teaching Cards Support Whole-Child Development

The strength of the Creative Curriculum lies in its holistic approach. The Intentional Teaching Cards are not siloed by subject; rather, they integrate skills across multiple domains within a single activity. For example, a card about building with blocks might simultaneously target social-emotional learning (sharing and turn-taking), mathematics (counting and spatial awareness), and physical development (fine motor skills). This integrated design mirrors how young children naturally learn—through connected experiences, not isolated drills.

Literacy and Language Development

Many ITCs focus on building early literacy foundations. Cards like "Reading Nonfiction Books" or "Playing with Rhyming Words" provide teachers with structured yet fun ways to develop phonological awareness, print concepts, and comprehension. The cards emphasize interactive read-alouds and intentional conversations, ensuring that literacy instruction is embedded in meaningful context. Vocabulary cards introduce words like "predict" or "character," giving children a rich verbal foundation.

Mathematics and Logical Thinking

Mathematical thinking is naturally woven into the Creative Curriculum, and the Intentional Teaching Cards offer hands-on explorations of number sense, patterns, geometry, and measurement. An activity such as "Counting and Comparing Sets" uses everyday objects like buttons or counting bears to help children grasp one-to-one correspondence and comparison vocabulary. These cards align with early math standards and encourage problem-solving, not just rote memorization.

Social-Emotional Learning

Perhaps one of the most critical areas for preschoolers is social-emotional competence. Intentional Teaching Cards include experiences that help children identify feelings, solve conflicts, and build friendships. For instance, the card "Solving Problems with Friends" guides a teacher through a role-play scenario where children practice using words to express needs and negotiate solutions. This proactive approach reduces challenging behaviors and builds a supportive classroom community.

Physical Development and the Arts

Young children need ample opportunities to move and create. Cards targeting fine motor skills (like using tweezers or lacing cards) and gross motor skills (like obstacle courses or dance) ensure that physical development is intentional. Similarly, art-focused cards encourage creative expression—exploring color mixing, texture, and composition—while teaching foundational concepts like cause and effect and aesthetics.

Practical Strategies for Using Intentional Teaching Cards in the Classroom

To maximize the impact of these cards, teachers should view them as flexible guides rather than rigid scripts. The key is **intentionality**: purposefully selecting a card that aligns with the current interests of the children, their developmental needs, or the ongoing classroom investigation. Here are practical strategies for implementation.

Integrating with Ongoing Studies

One of the most effective ways to use the cards is to weave them into your existing study topics. If your classroom is exploring "Buildings," you might choose a card about measuring with nonstandard units, a card about identifying shapes in architecture, and a literacy card about urban communities. This integration keeps learning cohesive and relevant. The cards are designed to be cross-referenced with the Creative Curriculum's "Teaching Strategies Gold" objectives, making it easy to assess specific skills within a study.

Differentiating for Diverse Learners

Each card includes built-in differentiation. For example, a math card might suggest using smaller numbers (1–3) for children just beginning to count, while offering word problems with numbers up to ten for more advanced learners. The suggestions are concrete and actionable, such as "Place only three objects on the mat instead of five." This allows a teacher to include all children in the same experience while meeting them at their individual level. It also supports children with disabilities or those who are dual-language learners by providing modifications like using real objects or visual cues.

Using Cards for Small-Group Instruction

While many ITCs can be used during whole-group time (e.g., morning meeting or story time), they shine in small-group settings. A teacher can pull two to four children for a focused 10–15 minute experience. This allows for closer observation, more individualized scaffolding, and authentic conversation. Over the course of a week, the teacher can rotate through all children, ensuring each child receives targeted support in areas of need or interest.

Building Teacher Confidence and Reflection

For new teachers, Intentional Teaching Cards serve as a lifeline. They remove the guesswork from lesson planning and provide a clear "next step" for teaching a skill. More experienced teachers can use the cards to reflect on and refine their practice. After implementing a card, a teacher might ask: "What did the children understand? What adjustments could I make? How can I extend this learning into centers or free play?" The cards become a tool for continuous professional growth.

Aligning Intentional Teaching Cards with Assessment and Standards

One of the most significant benefits of the Creative Curriculum system is its alignment with ongoing assessment. Each Intentional Teaching Card is directly linked to objectives from the "Teaching Strategies Gold" assessment tool. For instance, a card on "Engaging in Shared Writing" might correlate with objective 17b (Writes using drawing and emergent writing). This connection allows teachers to easily document observations and gather evidence of children's progress. Furthermore, the cards are aligned with most state early learning standards, making them a reliable tool for demonstrating compliance and program quality.

Using the Intentional Teaching Cards ensures that instruction is not just random fun, but that it deliberately targets the skills children need to be ready for kindergarten and beyond. Because the cards are research-based and field-tested, teachers can trust that the strategies are effective. Whether the goal is to enhance executive function, vocabulary, or early literacy, there is likely an Intentional Teaching Card that provides a clear pathway.

Frequently Asked Questions About Intentional Teaching Cards

Q: Are these cards only used during small group time?

A: No. While they are perfect for small groups, many cards can also be adapted for large group activities, circle time, or even one-on-one interactions. The flexibility is built in. The teacher decides the best context based on the children's needs.

Q: Do I need to follow the cards exactly as written?

A: Not at all. The cards are a guide. Experienced teachers often modify the language, materials, or sequence to better fit their specific group. The most important thing is to maintain the **intentional focus** on the learning goal.

Q: How many cards should I use in a day?

A: Most teachers use 1–2 Intentional Teaching Cards per day for small group or whole group instruction. The rest of the day is filled with free choice centers, outdoor time, and routines. The cards are meant to enhance, not dominate, the daily schedule.

Q: Where can I get the Creative Curriculum for Preschool Intentional Teaching Cards?
A: They are typically included in the full Creative Curriculum kit published by Teaching Strategies. They may also be available for purchase separately as a set or digitally through the Teaching Strategies online platform. Schools and districts often purchase them as part of a comprehensive curriculum adoption.

Tips for Maximizing the Impact of Intentional Teaching Cards

1. Organize by Domain: Sort your cards into labeled containers or binders by learning domain (literacy, math, social-emotional, etc.) for quick retrieval.
2. Plan Ahead: Each week, choose 5–8 cards that align with your study and the children's observed needs. Place them in your lesson plan binder.
3. Model the Language: The vocabulary on the cards is essential. Use it throughout the day—not just during the activity—to reinforce learning.
4. Document Learning: Take photos or notes while a card is being used. These can later be used for assessment portfolios or sharing with families.
5. Collaborate with Colleagues: Share which cards worked well and which were less successful. Professional learning communities can generate new ways to adapt the cards.
6. Involve Families: Send home the "Home–School Connection" suggestions from the cards. This builds a bridge between classroom learning and family routines.

Conclusion

The **Creative Curriculum for Preschool Intentional Teaching Cards** represent a cornerstone of effective, developmentally appropriate practice. They transform teaching from an improvisational art into a deliberate, responsive, and joyful science. By providing clear objectives, structured activities, and built-in differentiation, these cards empower educators to focus on what matters most: meaningful interactions with children. When used with intention and flexibility, they help preschoolers build foundational skills in literacy, math, social-emotional development, and beyond. For any teacher or program committed to nurturing curious, capable, and confident learners, the Intentional Teaching Cards are an indispensable toolkit—one that turns every moment into an opportunity for growth.

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