Manchester Child Care Center based on the Creative Curriculum, adapted for two age groups—older toddlers (20-36 months) and preschoolers (37-66 months)—with an emphasis on child-centered learning and exploration. This plan covers essential areas for growth and development across literacy, math, science, and social studies through thematic, hands-on projects.

**Curriculum Overview**

* **Approach:** Child-centered, project-based learning with age-appropriate materials and activities.
* **Learning Areas:** Literacy, Math, Science, Social Studies, Motor Skills, and Social-Emotional Development.
* **Classes:**
  + **Class 1:** Older Toddlers (20-36 months)
  + **Class 2:** Preschoolers (37-66 months)

**Class 1: Older Toddlers (20-36 Months)**

**Goals for Older Toddlers:**

* Foster curiosity through exploration and sensory-based activities.
* Support language development and early literacy.
* Develop basic counting and sorting skills.
* Encourage motor skill development and self-help abilities.

**Sample Thematic Units and Activities:**

1. **Theme: "All About Me"**
   * **Literacy:** Introduce picture books about families and feelings. Use interactive storytelling to build vocabulary.
   * **Math:** Count body parts (e.g., "two eyes, ten fingers").
   * **Science:** Explore mirrors, allowing children to observe and describe their reflections.
   * **Social Studies:** Create a family wall where children can share photos and discuss family members.
   * **Motor Skills:** Practice fine motor skills with playdough, allowing children to form shapes.
2. **Theme: "Seasons and Weather"**
   * **Literacy:** Read seasonal books and sing songs about weather.
   * **Math:** Sort objects by color to represent different seasons (e.g., green for spring, orange for autumn).
   * **Science:** Sensory bins with seasonal items (e.g., leaves in fall, flowers in spring).
   * **Social Studies:** Discuss weather changes and what clothing we wear in each season.
   * **Motor Skills:** Outdoor play to feel different types of weather (windy, sunny).
3. **Theme: "Animals and Nature"**
   * **Literacy:** Introduce animal-themed picture books and animal sounds.
   * **Math:** Basic sorting with animal figurines (e.g., by size or color).
   * **Science:** Observation of classroom plants, learning about caring for living things.
   * **Social Studies:** Simple discussions about where animals live (e.g., farms, forests).
   * **Motor Skills:** Gross motor play, imitating animal movements (hopping like a bunny, crawling like a bear).

**Class 2: Preschoolers (37-66 Months)**

**Goals for Preschoolers:**

* Advance language skills with storytelling and early writing.
* Introduce foundational math concepts like counting, sorting, and shapes.
* Encourage scientific thinking through exploration and experimentation.
* Develop social awareness through community and culture-related activities.
* Support social-emotional growth and cooperative play.

**Sample Thematic Units and Activities:**

1. **Theme: "Community Helpers"**
   * **Literacy:** Storybooks about different jobs (e.g., firefighter, doctor). Engage in role-playing to build vocabulary.
   * **Math:** Practice counting with items related to community helpers (e.g., counting toy stethoscopes, fire hats).
   * **Science:** Explore basic tools used by community helpers (magnifying glasses for “detectives,” toy tools for “builders”).
   * **Social Studies:** Set up a “neighborhood” in the classroom where children can pretend to be various helpers.
   * **Motor Skills:** Fine motor activities, such as sorting “mail” (letters) in a post office play setup.
2. **Theme: "My Five Senses"**
   * **Literacy:** Use descriptive books and vocabulary-building games related to the senses.
   * **Math:** Sort objects by textures (e.g., soft, rough) and classify them.
   * **Science:** Sensory exploration stations for each sense, like tasting stations or sound jars.
   * **Social Studies:** Discuss how senses help us understand our world and relate to each other.
   * **Motor Skills:** Tactile play activities to strengthen fine motor skills, like sensory bins with sand or rice.
3. **Theme: "Growing Things"**
   * **Literacy:** Read books about plants and gardening.
   * **Math:** Measure plant growth over time with simple counting tools (rulers).
   * **Science:** Plant seeds in the classroom and observe changes over weeks.
   * **Social Studies:** Discuss where food comes from and the role of farmers.
   * **Motor Skills:** Outdoor gardening activities that encourage gross motor skills.
4. **Theme: "Transportation"**
   * **Literacy:** Read about different modes of transport and introduce related vocabulary.
   * **Math:** Count and sort toy vehicles by type (car, bus, plane).
   * **Science:** Build ramps to see how cars move, exploring gravity.
   * **Social Studies:** Map out a simple “city” in the classroom, discussing places we go.
   * **Motor Skills:** Gross motor play to mimic vehicle movements (running like cars, “flying” like planes).

**Daily Routine and Structure**

Each day will include a mix of:

* **Circle Time:** Begin with greetings, songs, and thematic storytelling.
* **Free Exploration:** Stations are set up for children to engage in sensory, literacy, math, and creative activities.
* **Guided Activity:** Teachers introduce structured activities around the weekly theme.
* **Outdoor Play:** Physical activities for motor skill development.
* **Quiet Time and Reflection:** Opportunities for self-regulation and winding down.

**Assessment and Family Involvement**

* **Observation and Documentation:** Teachers will document children’s progress through observation notes and photos.
* **Parent Involvement:** Share weekly themes and encourage parents to reinforce topics at home through reading, discussions, or simple activities.

Here are some well-researched references supporting the approaches integrated in the curriculum for Manchester Child Care Center, specifically focusing on child-centered learning, thematic projects, and developmentally appropriate practices.

**1. Creative Curriculum Evidence Base**

* **Dodge, D. T., Colker, L. J., & Heroman, C. (2010). The Creative Curriculum for Preschool.** Teaching Strategies.
  + **Overview:** This foundational resource for the Creative Curriculum is widely used in early childhood programs and includes extensive research on the effectiveness of integrating structured, thematic projects. The curriculum supports the use of literacy, math, and social-emotional development for young children, promoting active, exploratory learning.
  + **Relevance:** Provides a structured, research-backed framework for thematic and hands-on learning that supports children’s cognitive and social development.
* \*\*Teaching Strategies, LLC. (2019). **The Creative Curriculum® System for Preschool: Research Summary.**
  + **Overview:** This report outlines the empirical support for Creative Curriculum’s effectiveness, particularly in fostering school readiness. It shows gains in social-emotional, language, cognitive, and physical development through active learning and play-based experiences.
  + **Relevance:** Evidence of how Creative Curriculum improves foundational skills for preschool readiness.

**2. Child-Centered Learning and Exploration**

* **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2009). Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8.**
  + **Overview:** This publication sets forth the standards for developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), emphasizing that young children learn best through hands-on exploration and play.
  + **Relevance:** Provides guidelines supporting the importance of child-centered, play-based learning, which is crucial for this curriculum’s design, ensuring age-appropriate practices that align with children's developmental stages.
* **Piaget, J. (1977). The Development of Thought: Equilibration of Cognitive Structures.** Viking Press.
  + **Overview:** Piaget’s theory of cognitive development emphasizes active exploration and the role of play in learning, foundational for child-centered curriculum design.
  + **Relevance:** Supports the idea of children as active learners who develop understanding through interactions with their environment.

**3. Thematic, Hands-On Learning for Growth and Development**

* **Epstein, A. S. (2007). The Intentional Teacher: Choosing the Best Strategies for Young Children’s Learning.** NAEYC.
  + **Overview:** This book explores various strategies to foster learning in young children, including the use of thematic projects and hands-on activities to reinforce skills in literacy, math, and science.
  + **Relevance:** Provides insights into how intentional teaching with thematic units engages children and promotes deeper understanding across content areas.
* **Chard, S. C. (2004). The Project Approach: Making Curriculum Come Alive.** Scholastic.
  + **Overview:** This resource explains the project-based approach, which involves children in extended investigations of a topic. It demonstrates how project-based learning can enhance cognitive development, social interaction, and problem-solving.
  + **Relevance:** Supports the use of thematic projects and hands-on learning in a way that engages children and promotes comprehensive growth.

**4. Evidence on Social-Emotional Development and Exploration-Based Learning**

* **Jones, D. E., Greenberg, M., & Crowley, M. (2015). Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health: The Relationship Between Kindergarten Social Competence and Future Wellness.** American Journal of Public Health, 105(11), 2283–2290. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302630
  + **Overview:** This study highlights the importance of social-emotional skills in early childhood and their long-term impacts on wellness, underlining the role of social-emotional learning (SEL) in early childhood education.
  + **Relevance:** Validates the inclusion of social-emotional activities in the curriculum, emphasizing the importance of social skills, self-regulation, and emotional health.
* **Hyson, M. (2004). The Emotional Development of Young Children: Building an Emotion-Centered Curriculum.** Teachers College Press.
  + **Overview:** Hyson provides an evidence-based perspective on integrating emotional development into early childhood curricula, supporting the approach of blending cognitive and social-emotional growth.
  + **Relevance:** Helps justify the focus on emotional well-being in the curriculum, ensuring that social-emotional development is interwoven with thematic and cognitive learning.

**5. Literacy, Math, Science, and Social Studies Integration**

* **Snow, C. E., & Van Hemel, S. B. (2008). Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How.** National Academies Press.
  + **Overview:** This book covers evidence-based early childhood assessments and provides insights into best practices for integrating academic subjects into early learning environments.
  + **Relevance:** Supports the curriculum’s integration of literacy, math, science, and social studies through structured, thematic activities, which promotes school readiness and learning continuity.
* **Sarama, J., & Clements, D. H. (2009). Early Childhood Mathematics Education Research: Learning Trajectories for Young Children.** Routledge.
  + **Overview:** This text focuses on early childhood math education, highlighting hands-on and play-based methods for building foundational math skills.
  + **Relevance:** Supports the curriculum’s hands-on approach for math skill-building, showing that young children learn mathematical concepts best through interactive, project-based activities.