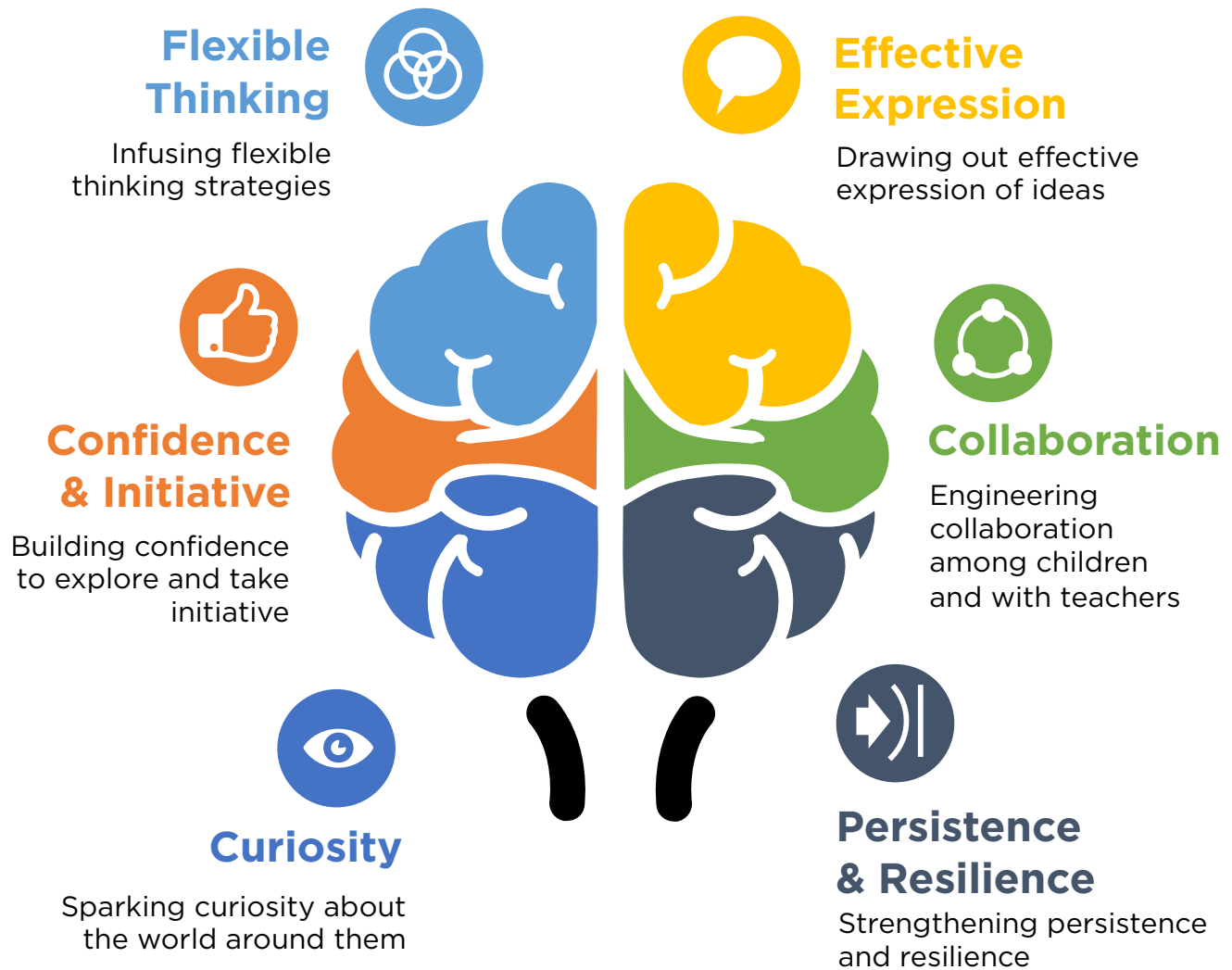## The Early Essentials

We empower children with essential skills to be successful in kindergarten and beyond by building their core knowledge and abilities to process new information and adapt:

Flexible Thinking

Infusing flexible thinking strategies

Effective Expression

Drawing out effective expression of ideas

Confidence & Initiative

Building confidence to explore and take initiative

Collaboration

Engineering collaboration among children and with teachers

Curiosity

Sparking curiosity about the world around them

Persistence & Resilience

Strengthening persistence and resilience

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Core Beliefs About How Children Learn

We believe that every child...

Is competent and capable	Learns through relationships with adults and peers	Constructs knowledge from diverse experiences	Learns and develops at a unique and individual pace	Is constantly learning

Conditions for Learning

With these elements we optimize learning

RELATIONSHIPS
Responsive and caring relationships establish the secure base from which children can explore the world.

PLAY
Play is crucial to children's physical, intellectual and social development.

UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT
Each child must be understood within the context of their individual family, community and experiences.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES
Each child has access to the educational resources they need to thrive.

POSITIVE FOCUS
Each child's positive attributes are identified and recognized.

PREDICTABLE CONTEXT
Each child thrives in the context of predictable relationships, routines and actions

The Role of All Adults

Build strong relationships with children, families and colleagues
- Establish routines, rituals and structures to support the school family
- Engage families as active partners in the education of their child(ren)
- Establish smooth transition routines
- Seek to understand others' perspectives or concerns in a productive and empathetic way
- Examine own assumptions about children and their families; strive continuously to overcome biases and assumptions

Intentional about the decisions they make impacting the education of young children
- Establish collective goals for children and the school; focus on achieving them
- Regularly collect, monitor and evaluate child data to plan for individualized learning, growth and development
- Use data to understand the effectiveness of programmatic and practice decisions in order to engage in continuous quality improvement
- Leverage diverse perspectives to generate new ideas, solutions and strategies
- Utilize knowledge of community, systems and relevant research when making decisions

Create a supportive learning environment through collaboration
- Communicate regularly with school colleagues and families to reflect, share, plan and support
- Identify potential problems, take initiative to generate solutions, elevate concerns as necessary
- Actively contribute to a positive and supportive workplace culture
- Confer with peers and subject matter experts to share strategies and improve practice

Continually appraise own competencies, seek feedback and adjust practice as necessary to meet the needs of children
- Engage in self-reflective practices at regular intervals
- Collaboratively develop and utilize an individual professional growth plan with ambitious, achievable goals
- Seek and utilize resources to improve own practice and knowledge base
- Consistently seek out and participate in collaborative learning

The Role of Teachers

Create caring classroom communities for learning
- Establish warm and responsive relationships that allow each child to feel recognized, acknowledged and secure
- Share decision making with children about classroom rules, planning activities and group celebrations
- Stay attuned and responsive to the needs of all children
- Plan and implement hands-on activities that develop positive self-esteem and social skills
- Support children's friendships by helping them learn to take turns, listen to one another and provide comfort when needed

Have deep understanding of child development and use observational knowledge to interpret, adjust, refine and redirect their practice
- Actively seek out and apply ongoing evidence-based professional learning that increases understanding of child development and maintains a fresh perspective on learning in the early years
- Conduct and document regular objective observations to track growth and development and individualize learning
- Focus practice on identified learning outcomes, the ELI Six Essentials and the Indiana Early Learning Foundations
- Participate in teaching and learning feedback loops

Implement instructional practices that are responsive to the evolving learning needs of children
- Understand and utilize curricula, consistently extending learning to support growth and development and expand on curiosities
- Consistently use daily observations, anecdotes and student work product to design differentiated instruction that supports, challenges and introduces the next developmental steps
- Plan and implement a variety of experiences that promote learning across all developmental domains
- Encourage children to think, reason, question and experiment; build skills for children to explain their thinking
- Provide a balance between child-initiated and adult-initiated, active and quiet, fine-motor and large-motor, and indoor and outdoor activities
- Promote sound health, safety and nutritional practices
- Use a variety of media and technology to enrich the curriculum and extend learning

Design stimulating environments that enhance development and learning, responding to the needs, tendencies and interests of each child
- Thoughtfully and purposefully select materials, spaces and processes to support children's needs, interests and questions
- Provide the space, time and support for children to make multiple attempts at success
- Ensure active supervision of children at all times, interacting with children in all learning spaces (indoors and outdoors)
- Create and utilize displays to recognize and enhance the children's learning experience

Understand the effects of stress and adversity, implement tools and techniques to buffer the impact
- Establish safe, nurturing and predictable classroom rhythms and routines
- Model and incorporate components of well-being into daily routines
- Facilitate children's ability to identify feelings, describe problems, negotiate differences and generate solutions

Empower children to develop curiosities, initiative, risk-taking and a sense of accomplishment
- Encourage conversation by asking open-ended questions
- Use observations and assessments to scaffold classroom activities
- Build leadership in children through individual decision making

The Role of Leaders

Cultivate a learning culture for the school
- Remain sensitive, aware and responsive to the needs of the school community
- Be present daily in classrooms and shared spaces
- Routinely solicit feedback from families, staff and community; incorporate feedback when reasonable and possible
- Seek and select quality teaching candidates
- Model self-reflective practices and engage in continual professional learning

Recognize and support teacher knowledge and decision making as vital to educational effectiveness
- Foster trust and autonomy by recognizing strengths and encouraging continued professional growth
- Conduct regular classroom walk-throughs and formal observations to understand how educators are supporting children
- Actively support partnerships between teachers and families

Establish instructional leadership
- Make instructional quality the top priority of the school
- Model and set high expectations for performance and provide the support needed to achieve
- Construct systems for peer mentoring and coaching
- Confer and collaborate regularly with teams, staff members and partners to ensure developmentally appropriate teaching practices are in place, evaluate effectiveness and set goals around child outcomes

Intentionally design the school and processes to enrich learning
- Optimize and leverage resources and materials so that teachers may address the learning needs of the children
- Build regular, predictable communication routines into the school schedule
- Establish school structures that support for cross-planning and communities of practice
- Ensure the flow of the physical structure and daily schedule support children and their families as well as maximize learning opportunities

Provide tools and resources so that teachers can reduce the impact of stress and adversity
- Design staffing structures and polices that promote continuity of care
- Establish partnerships with field experts to facilitate rapid interventions
- Model and raise awareness of self-care habits and wellness

Empower teachers to experiment and explore a range of solutions and approaches to meet the developmental and learning needs of children
- Foster conversation and brainstorm solutions concerning individual children and classrooms
- Create an environment that allows for risk-taking; recognize failures as learning opportunities
- Recognize when a true need for external resources exists; facilitate access

Prioritize the educational needs of children and teachers in the sustainability of the program
- Identify and regularly review the needs of teachers, children and families
- Evaluate the effectiveness of financial and human resources on student outcomes

The Role of Learning Environments

Be visually appealing, inviting and engaging
- Reflect thoughtful organization and intentional arrangements to spark curiosity and engagement
- Provide learning materials that are accessible and ample to meet the developmental needs of each and every child
- Promote discovery and exploration through engaging and thought-provoking materials
- Reflect real-life experiences and the curriculum through authentic materials
- Predominately display children's current work

Celebrate the uniqueness of each child and their family
- Represent children and their families throughout the classroom and school environment in a respectful manner
- Accommodate diverse family structures, cultures, abilities and backgrounds through representative materials
- Recognize, invite and encourage children and families to share their language, culture, traditions and special skills, hobbies and interests in the classroom, school and organizational community

Promote engagement, stimulate curiosities and encourage expressions of children's emotions and ideas
- Maximize choice and promote creativity
- Foster daily routines that are predictable and consistent but responsive to the interests and needs of children
- Adjust regularly, yet maintain consistency, to reflect current learning objectives, skill levels, interests and needs of the children
- Support the expression and identification of all emotions through materials and space
- Support successful navigation of independent play and interactions with others through materials and space

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