

Curriculum Overview

Welcome and thank you for viewing this webinar. For many of you this is your first step in your child's educational journey which will span from preschool to graduation.

Our Early Childhood program is a department within the Northville Public School District. All of our programs are licensed through the State of Michigan and accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Being nationally accredited puts us in a rather elite group. Michigan has approximately 127 accredited programs, 3 of those programs are ours, here in Northville.

Research supports a strong connection between High-Quality Early Childhood experiences and children's later academic success. Accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children is considered "the" mark of quality in ECE. A brief video highlighting NAEYC accreditation is available to view on our website.

Our curriculum and approach to education is inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia. The Reggio philosophy embraces a *negotiated* curriculum that is both emergent and intentional.

It bases learning on children's true interests

Teaching teams observe children and reflect on common elements being pursued by the children. Weekly planning sheets are used as a tool for documentation of ideas to be explored and theories to be investigated.

It supports learning through observation and listening.

The teacher plays an important role as children investigate. Their words are recorded, samples of work are collected and children are photographed in action! As teachers support children's ideas they provide possibilities for children to extend their ideas, deepen their investigations and develop knowledge.

This approach also Teaches children to be better communicators.

Children have opportunities for expression through a wide variety of media including both natural and recycled materials. Collaborative project work is a key component and children are encouraged to dialogue, compare, negotiate, and problem solve together.

Curriculum Webinar Pre-K

All of our Pre-K programs follow the same curriculum, which is rooted in best practice and provides children with hands-on, developmentally appropriate experiences. Plans are developed to provide a balance of child initiated and teacher-guided activities. Our first focus is to support children's **social-emotional development**. We work closely with families to support the transition from home to school. A predictable routine is established with the children by following a daily schedule. Children work on building their skills and confidence as they wait their turn, make choices, solve problems and participate in both small and large group gathering times. Building children's independence and autonomy is a big focus.

The following concepts have been identified by the National Association for the Education of Young Children as important areas of learning for preschool children.

Literacy is a daily focus in our classrooms. Children have access to a large variety of books and engage in opportunities to read and be read to individually and in small or large group settings. A print-rich environment in our classrooms include books, documentation of children's own words, vocabulary words, portfolios, calendars and children's names. Children's writing often begins with scribbles as they work towards writing letters, the alphabet, and eventually words and phrases. Children write their names in a variety of ways including signing in daily which provides an opportunity for teachers to track their progress and development. Children also have access to **site word cards** to assist them with their writing. To support our emergent curriculum, the cards are created based on the current interest or topics of study in the classroom. Children also verbally describe their work and our teachers write down their dictated words.

In the area of **Science**, children have opportunities to learn about the world around them. The weather is often discussed at group gatherings and the children chart and graph weather patterns and talk about how the weather impacts our lives. Simple experiments are part of the curriculum as well as activities involving investigating the effects of materials like what sinks or floats, learning about their 5 senses and building an understanding of life cycles by watching as a caterpillar turns into a butterfly. Children have the opportunity to use scientific tools like magnifying glasses, microscopes and magnets and to learn scientific terminology like predicting, investigating, and observing.

Social Studies is supported through activities like drawing self-portraits, which fosters children's self-identity. This often leads to discussions about similarities and differences and the diversity in our society. Children also learn to function as a member of the classroom community when rules and routines are established together. And as children play in the dramatic play area they discuss social roles in the family and workplace and learn to negotiate differences. Children learn about the broader community by engaging in conversations about community helpers, careers and looking at local maps.

In supporting **Early Mathematics**, the focus is on building children's understanding of numbers; including number names and their relationships to objects and quantities. Children often reinforce their learning of numbers by counting. Children work with 5 or 10-frame cards to build their foundational concepts of numbers including understanding their values and one-to-one correspondence. Basic concepts of geometry are taught as children learn to recognize and identify shapes. Measurement is also explored as children use standard and non-standard tools to determine lengths and sizes.

In the area of **Health and Safety** teachers discuss good health practices like tooth brushing, hand washing and nutrition. Group gatherings provide opportunities to talk about safety rules in the home, classroom, playground and community. Special visitors are often invited into the classroom to support children's understanding of health and safety.

Each of these five content areas are addressed through developmentally appropriate, hands-on activities that make learning fun and engaging.

Our curriculum also includes **Project** and **Small Group work**.

Project work involves identifying the interests of the children, building on their previous knowledge and providing opportunities to research, work together, be creative and learn new skills while engaged in the project. Project work expands children's thinking and provides opportunities for children to be active participants in their learning.

Small group work involves 4 – 8 children at a time and provides the opportunity for more teacher –directed activities. This approach allows for more individualized instruction based on children's developing abilities and goals.

Throughout the preschool years, children's **Motor Skills** are developing. **Fine motor** development is supported as children paint, draw, cut, manipulate various toys, put together puzzles, pinch, roll and poke clay and other moldable materials. The outdoor environment supports **Large motor** development in very natural and fun ways. Our indoor motor skills program, run primarily by trained parent volunteers, targets specific areas of large motor development to support brain development and lay the foundation for later academic success.

Communication and Assessment

We view parents as their child's first and most important teacher and work in collaboration with to provide the best possible early education for your child. We welcome opportunities to **touch base with families** during drop off and pick up times and to speak with parents about their child's growth and development. Our teachers send out **regular emails** which include information on activities taking place along with the concepts that are being addressed in the classroom. Documentation of projects and photos of the children are often included in family communications.

Newsletters are provided monthly and are typically posted on parent boards. They include important dates and deadlines, information on child development and education, and updates on what's happening in the classroom.

Assessment is a powerful tool. We assess what children know by observing them in a natural play environment and through daily conversations and interactions with them. These observations provide us with information on what children know, along with what areas need more focus and practice. Within the first 3 months of enrollment we ask parents complete an on-line developmental screening called the **Ages and Stages Questionnaire or ASQ**. Parents complete the questionnaire based on their observations. Results are shared with the classroom teacher and are used to develop individual goals for each child.

Our teachers also collect **anecdotal notes** on children as they observe them in different play experiences. Classroom teams regularly review these notes to identify children's needs and interests and to help guide their planning and instruction

Teaching teams create **portfolios** for each child. A portfolio is a collection of children's experiences, growth and development from the first day of school until

the last. The portfolio may include: drawings, writings or other work samples, photographs, and teacher's observations.

The **assessment form** covers each of the academic content areas and is consistent with the portfolio. During **Parent/Teacher conferences** in both the fall and the spring, teachers provide parents with a written assessment of each child's development, they review the child's portfolio with parents, and share progress toward goals. Conferences also provide a time for teachers to share what is happening in the classroom and to hear more about parent observations at home. Our goal is to work in partnership with families!

There are a few things that **Set Us Apart** from other programs.

A major component to quality you'll find in our programs are the teachers and support staff. Research indicates that excellent staff rank top among the high quality indicators for preschool and extended day programs. Our devoted team of educators stays on top of current research and best practices for children by participating in ongoing Professional Development opportunities. State guidelines require that Pre-school staff require 24 hours of Professional Development annually. Health and safety is always a top priority, so all teachers and many support staff are CPR and First Aid Certified, as well as being trained in other health care issues.

Staff routinely strengthen their knowledge of curriculum development, brain research and other topics that support our work with children and families. Being connected to the Northville Public School district offers many advantages. We are able to tap into a variety of the support resources available, including speech and language specialists. We also have opportunities to collaborate with elementary school staff, which can for example, support the transition for children as they move from preschool to elementary school.

We also participate with the District School Improvement process. This involves a committee of our Coordinators, teachers and parents, who establish goals each year to be implemented throughout our programs. This process deepens our connection to the other schools within the district and provides a focus on continuous improvement.

Detailed information on all of our programs can be found on our website. Classroom times and locations vary to provide parents with a variety of options.

Families of the Northville School District and the staff of the Early Childhood Education and Extended Day programs have the unique opportunity to partner together to provide for and welcome the children of this community. Thank you for viewing this webinar.