

THE PARK SCHOOL

2019-2020

CURRICULUM GUIDE



PREKINDERGARTEN

PREKINDERGARTEN

OVERVIEW

The PreKindergarten program enlarges the world of young children and expands their ability to explore with new and varied experiences. Teachers guide each child's growing social-emotional and cognitive skills, while paying close attention to the development of self-esteem, acceptance of others, and love of learning. Teachers work collaboratively to develop in students a positive and creative approach to learning; children are encouraged to take risks, and teachers help them deal effectively with both successes and challenges. One of the most important goals of the program is for children to engage joyfully in cooperative work and play. By taking each child's particular interests and strengths into consideration, teachers provide developmentally appropriate activities and opportunities to play. The PreK program supports the developing skills of early learners by laying a strong foundation in the areas of literacy, social studies, mathematics and science.

Throughout the year, children explore a variety of relevant books, both with teachers and on their own. Children discuss the language and the illustrations in literature. They are encouraged to retell stories, talk about their observations, make predictions, and draw conclusions. Through the use of journals and bookmaking, teachers empower students to see themselves as authors and illustrators. Children are introduced to phonological awareness skills including upper and lower case letters and consonant sounds, alliteration, and rhyme. The *Handwriting Without Tears* program is used to reinforce these skills, including a proper pencil grip.

The social studies curriculum addresses the central questions: "How are we alike?" "How are we different?" "What connects us?" Students celebrate and discuss similarities and differences among themselves and their families. Some topics of conversation and projects include explorations of the ranges of skin color, family configurations, stereotypes, as well as gender, ethnic and religious differences, and being an ally. Families are encouraged to visit the classroom and share their cultures and traditions as a way of promoting understanding and building community. The children are introduced to the larger Park community through partnerships with other grade levels.

In PreK, math is seen as a tool for making sense of the world. We create an environment that provides puzzlement, stimulates curiosity, encourages a sense of wonder, and prompts questions and investigations. Within this environment, children encounter and explore mathematical concepts when building with blocks, playing in the sand/water table, playing games, and creating art projects. Additionally, teachers create rich mathematical explorations and choose materials that allow for exploration, multi-sensory experiences and the development of math ideas. These investigations facilitate the asking of questions and critical thinking. Big ideas that convey the core mathematical concepts and skills are the organizing structure during the year: number, number sense, and counting; classifying, sorting, and patterning; data and analysis; and geometry and spatial sense. These big ideas build on young children's informal mathematical knowledge and promote understanding of basic mathematical concepts and the development of logical mathematical thinking. These are the foundation for further mathematics learning and facilitate long-lasting mathematical understanding.

The science curriculum focuses on the exploration of the natural world through the lenses of sight, touch, sound, and wonder. In autumn, children take nature walks to observe how the world changes color. Color mixing and the use of natural materials in art projects reinforce students' observations. In the winter, students discuss how changes in the amount of daylight affect weather patterns, and they investigate the properties of water by experimenting with ice crystals. In the spring, the classes observe and document how plants grow.

MUSIC

PreK children participate in a wide range of musical activities that include: listening, dancing/movement, instrumental work, singing, and performing. General music instruction is in alignment with the National Association for Music Education standards.

Consideration of young children's growing abilities, both physical and cognitive, is reflected in the selection of materials. For example, songs generally span the range of one octave, have short phrases, are thematically appealing to young children, and include some movement and/or percussion instrument playing. In both solo and group singing, emphasis is given to vocal quality, the conscious discrimination of high-low tones, fast-slow beats, strong-weak accents, melodic direction, and rhythm. Percussion instrument playing helps to develop fine

and gross motor skills, rhythmic accuracy, and improvisational skills. Attention is given to the historical, cultural, and social context of music through listening, discussion, movement, and stories.

Park's music program helps to foster creativity and self-expression, while developing the student's music skills. Performances and informances are used as learning tools and are opportunities for students to demonstrate what they are learning in music class

Classes meet four times per week in 20-minute sessions.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In PreKindergarten, children explore their physical capabilities and develop physical skills at their own pace. Movement exploration, perceptual motor development, the development of fundamental physical skills, and the importance of physical fitness are emphasized.

Each class begins with warm-up exercises and basic locomotor skills. Important aspects of the program include the development of basic movement skills, work with small manipulatives, bean bags, hoops, balls, short and long jump rope skills, and rhythmic activities. The children also explore balance beams and other gymnastic equipment, climb, and negotiate a variety of obstacle courses. Teamwork is developed through parachute activities, partner activities, and the introduction of simple group games. Throughout the program, individual exploration is stressed, and the teachers strive to make the children's introduction to the world of physical education a happy and enjoyable experience.

Classes meet three times per week in 20-minute sessions.

LIBRARY

Every other week, PreKindergarteners come to the library to experience the magic of books. Each scheduled library class introduces a new book that, through exceptional language and art, encourages students to engage in the acts of attentive listening and interpretation. Guessing games, predicting narrative outcomes, and deciphering visual symbols are all creative and critical pre-reading strategies used to bring books alive. Books selected for lessons emphasize recent publications, a variety of fiction and non-fiction, with links to

developmentally appropriate academic and social curricula. PreK students do not check out books, but their families are encouraged to do so.