



# Preschool

## Welcome, Parents, to Tools of the Mind!

Your program or school district is investing in educators and children by partnering with Tools of the Mind. Your child has a wonderful year ahead!

### WHAT MAKES TOOLS UNIQUE?

In a Tools of the Mind preschool classroom:

- ✓ **Children learn to play, and play to learn.** Mature make-believe play is a powerful tool that supports children's development in all areas. We guide teachers in creating a classroom environment and schedule that support intentional play and create motivating learning experiences for children.
- ✓ **Classroom management techniques maximize instructional time,** increasing teacher to student and student to student interactions and task engagement.
- ✓ **Self-regulation development is intentional and continuous.** Classroom activities are designed to promote social-emotional and self-regulation development. We help teachers understand where each child is at on their path to self-regulation and how to support their journey.
- ✓ **Teachers are the heart of the program.** Tools of the Mind is a comprehensive professional development model in which we partner closely with teachers and promote their joyful engagement with children.



## What are daily activities like in a Tools PreK classroom?

In a Tools classroom environment, the daily schedule and activity flow are set up to maximize small group instruction time and peer scaffolding so that teachers may provide targeted, one-on-one scaffolding to meet the needs of each child across content areas. Tools teachers build a repertoire of strategies to support children's cognitive and social-emotional self-regulation development.

Using these strategies, Tools teachers focus on helping children become intentional and reflective learners, creating a classroom in which literacy, mathematics, and science instruction reflect children's learning capacity.



Activities are multi-level, capable of meeting the needs of children from 2 ½ to 5. Each child is challenged and supported at their level, and teachers learn how to scaffold children with diverse needs within the same activity.

## Tools PreK Activity Examples

### Buddy Reading

In Buddy Reading, pairs of children "read" books to each other, using external mediator cards to remind them of their roles as they take turns reading and listening. Buddy Reading is one of Tools of the Mind's cooperative partner activities. These activities are designed to foster self-regulation development and positive child-child interaction while fostering emergent literacy or numeracy skills.

### Play Planning

Children describe what they will do when they play and then represent their plan on paper in drawing and writing. Children work at their level, adding detail to their drawn plans, using lines to represent words in their written message, and using the Tools of the Mind Sound Map to write letters representing the sounds in their words.

### Graphics Practice

In Graphics Practice, children develop the fine motor and self-regulation skills needed for writing. They draw on whiteboards with markers, stopping and starting in response to musical cues. Children use private speech to help them remember how and what to write, learning to inhibit while also remembering the shape they're representing in writing.

### Venger Drawing

In small groups, teachers help children plan and discuss various ways to incorporate a geometric shape into a drawing. Children use geometric terms and positional vocabulary, brainstorming possibilities from multiple perspectives. Children verbalize a plan for their drawing and create a unique representation incorporating the geometric shape.

### Making Collections

In Making Collections, children work in a cooperative partnered mathematics activity taking turns counting and checking using one-to-one correspondence. Children use Vygotskian tactics such as private speech, external mediators, and other regulation tactics.

## Family Involvement

How can I support self-regulation development at home?

- **Support make-believe play at home:** Choose a familiar setting for pretend play, and make props and sets with materials like sheets, chairs, and recyclables.
- **Use the Tools playful approach to transitions:** Engage your child in pretending when it's time to leave the playground or get ready for bed. For example, leave the playground swinging your trunks like elephants or tip-toeing like mice trying to get past a cat!
- **Give your child a strategy to stay regulated during wait times:** Learn songs and fingerplays from the classroom and sing them during wait times, like when you're waiting at the doctor's office.
- **Play simple memory games to build working memory:** Put a few favorite toys or snacks on the table and ask your child to say their names to help you "remember." Then cover them, take something away, and have your child tell you what changed.
- **Read and re-read picture books together:** Let your child begin to tell you what happens next when you turn the page. Soon, with the support of the illustrations, your child will "read" the story to you!
- **Encourage children to think out loud when they are engaged in challenging tasks:** While getting dressed or looking for a missing puzzle piece, encourage your child to say aloud the steps in the process. This kind of self-talk, called private speech, supports concentration, sustained effort, and success!



# EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Tools of the Mind program is a proven-effective tool for preparing young children for success in school and beyond. Children in Tools were found to have higher rates of self-regulation in a National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) double-randomized study. This study compared children in PreK Tools classrooms with a control group using a high-quality ECE program with no emphasis on self-regulation. In addition to student gains, teachers trained in Tools scored higher in classroom management measures used classroom time more productively and had a higher rate of appropriate and cognitively challenging interactions, as measured by the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale and the CLASS.

Internal research on the Tools of the Mind program has shown positive impacts on academic and non-academic outcomes for PreK students. In one large, urban school district that has been implementing Tools for a number of years, data consistently shows that the Tools program has a significant impact on children's development across the year: despite beginning the school year at a considerable disadvantage, children in Tools PreK schools show a highly accelerated growth trajectory compared to children in non-Tools PreK classrooms, catching up to or even performing better on cognitive, language, literacy, and social-emotional TS Gold measures by the end of the year.

Tools of the Mind has lasting effects beyond PreK: children in this same district who attended a Tools PreK program were 24% more likely to meet literacy expectations at the beginning of their kindergarten school year than those who did not participate in a Tools PreK classroom.

## NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENTERING KINDERGARTEN AT GRADE-LEVEL LITERACY EXPECTATIONS



## National and International Recognition

### ★ UNESCO

In 2001, the International Bureau of Education, an arm of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), named Tools an exemplary innovative educational program.

### ★ OTHERS

Footage showing Tools classroom activities can be seen in the "Heads-up Reading" television series and the "Growing and Learning in Preschool" video produced by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). Scaffolded Writing, a technique invented by Tools to teach writing, has been named a model literacy technique by the International Reading Association.