



Philosophy and Curriculum

Great Beginnings Preschool is designed to be a gentle transition into a child's first 3K/4K experience, while providing a solid academic base for future schooling.

Our goals are to enable children to

- Develop social skills with peers and adults
- Participate in group learning activities
- Practice Christian values of kindness, cooperation and self discipline
- Discover and develop individual creativity and desire for knowledge
- Prepare for a successful entry to kindergarten

PLAY is the major component of our program as children learn through active exploration. Play is the primary mode of learning for the young child. We use our bright, cheerful classroom, a large indoor gym and our fenced play yard outside. Stories, art, science, music and movement are included as well as reading, writing and math readiness. Paint, play dough, art materials, water-play and sensory exploration are regularly provided. The preschool offers daily opportunities to self select toys or activities of interest, including dramatic play and creative expression.

Children learn best when they have positive, caring relationships with teachers and peers. The nature of the Great Beginnings Preschool classroom is a safe, unhurried and nonjudgmental place for thinking, playing and exploring. Dramatic play in particular is used as a way to interact with other children and develop problem solving skills. Since the ability to persist at difficult tasks and resist distraction are integral to future academic success, teachers provide positive feedback and opportunities for students to practice concentration, decision making, and persistence skills.

Activities at Great Beginnings Preschool are planned according to the age and developmental level of each child, and provide a variety of experiences. Activities include a balance of indoor and outdoor activities, active and quiet play, and individual and group activities. The activities provided will encourage the children to use and develop language and literacy skills, use large and small muscles, think creatively, learn new ideas and skills, and participate in imaginative play.

Great Beginnings Preschool helps children in the ongoing process of learning about themselves, developing awareness of others, and practicing the skills needed to

succeed in a group setting. We focus on assisting children develop self-regulation skills, positive social relationship skills, and techniques, including problem solving, for cooperative group participation. Children are given clear instructions on how to act respectfully and responsibly by helping take care of their own body, their classroom, and their classmates. Examples of this include helping to clean up their play areas, washing their hands to stay healthy, and demonstrating kindness to others. Christian faith formation is an integral part of the program.

Christian Faith Formation

Great Beginnings Preschool, as an integral part of First United Lutheran Church, ELCA, incorporates Christian concepts throughout the program, including prayer and Bible stories. Children learn that God loves them and accepts them as they are. Holidays including but not limited to Christmas and Easter are celebrated from a Christian point of view. Students may be invited to participate in special events and worship services. Varying faith concepts brought to the preschool by staff, parents and students are welcome. Families do not need to be a member of First United to participate.

Learning Activities

Great Beginnings Preschool uses theme-based units to provide a framework for developmentally appropriate activities. Teachers draw on a variety of sources for their curriculum programming, including but not limited to, The Creative Curriculum for Preschool. Examples of some of these activities include

Language development: Story time, free choice reading library, finger plays, dramatic play, and acting out stories

Large muscle skills: Indoor gym or outdoor playground, with balls, bean bag games, riding toys, obstacle courses and free play

Small muscle skills: Arts and crafts, blocks, sand or water play, and toys designed for small muscle development

Creative expression: Dramatic play and housekeeping area, music, instruments, and art materials

Self-help and self-regulation skills: taking turns, managing classroom routines and rules, cleaning the classroom, and practicing toileting and handwashing independence

Literacy and communication skills: Alphabet, rhymes, writing/prewriting, songs, stories, conversation with classmates and teachers, and literacy games

Specific skills that are addressed include

- Matching
- Sorting and classifying
- Measurement
- Calendar/days/time
- Counting and one-to-one correspondence
- Quantifying objects and discerning how much, more and less
- Numeral recognition
- Connecting numerals with quantities

Clothing

Play clothes and athletic shoes are a good choice! We provide the very best learning experiences for your children, and that does include paint, water, markers, play dough and outside play. There will be running, jumping, climbing, obstacle courses, dancing and other physical activities. Children will go outdoors in spring and fall when weather permits, so dress appropriately for the conditions.