



ST. ANDREW LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

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PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

St. Andrew Lutheran Preschool was established by this Lutheran congregation in 1984 as part of the educational ministry of the church. Our Preschool provides a Christian setting in which the child can develop intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, physically and socially. Our program uses a developmental curriculum because we know that children learn about our world in recognizable developmental stages. When children are young, they learn by example and imitation and through play. The values, attitudes and knowledge they develop by experiencing God's love through the adults closest to them are those which will stay with them throughout their lives.

We are dedicated to developing the whole child. Our objectives are:

- To share the love of Jesus with your child in song, story, and by example
- To encourage the child in building self esteem, independence and cooperative play skills, and to express his feelings and concern for others
- To develop the child's skills in problem solving, critical thinking, listening, verbal expression, imaginative play, early literacy and social interaction
- To encourage each child to respect and care for others, the community and his/her world
- To assist parents in guiding the development of their child

Acting as facilitators, our teachers create an environment that provides a challenging and developmental learning experience for all children. The teachers' task is to help each child acquire happy, useful patterns of behavior and a sense of wonder and trust which will lead toward becoming a productive, creative adult.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum is the total set of experiences provided for the children. The curriculum of St. Andrew Lutheran Preschool is based on the knowledge that children learn by doing, by interacting with others, and that they develop in predictable ways. Our planned activities ensure that each child has access to a variety of opportunities and multimedia through which to learn.

A day at Preschool provides learning time for discovery, circle, snack, stories and oral language experiences, outdoor play and learning centers which include blocks, housekeeping, writing, listening, art, playdough, books, music, dramatic play, cooking, science and media table. A sampling of themes throughout the year feature Farm and Farm Market, Dinosaurs, Bears, Space, Ocean, Fairy Tales and Folktales, All Around the House, Seasons, Community Helpers and Transportation.

These themes are addressed throughout the year by providing a variety of active learning experiences with literature, music, art, early science and math skills, health and physical education appropriate to each child's developmental level. Learning centers are maintained within each classroom, and children may move freely from one center to another. In this way, the child encounters many opportunities to gain in language skills, to expand his store of knowledge, to grow in curiosity, problem-solving, creativity, and to improve physical skills.

At the beginning of the school year, your child's teacher will give you a daily schedule. Each classroom has its own schedule, and this remains fairly consistent. Our skilled teachers plan well, yet they are flexible and will include activities that embrace any "teachable" moment. If an unplanned topic or event presents itself, the

teacher may add to or postpone previous plans in order to meet the needs and interests of the children.

The overall program is aimed at fostering a balanced growth for each child in each of these major developmental dimensions:

Physical

Through play, children begin to understand their bodies and how they work. Crayons, scissors, clay, paint, glue, blocks, woodworking, musical instruments and manipulative toys help develop small muscles. Climbing gyms, balls, pedal toys, slides, creative movement, etc. help develop large muscles and improve coordination, balance, speed, grace, vigor, and strength.

Friendship Skills

A young child's first lesson in community living is learning about belonging to a group. Within the group, a child learns to share, take turns, give and receive help, and to follow as well as lead. Children learn to express their needs verbally and to listen while others talk; to feel secure with adults and share their attention with peers. They are encouraged to be self-reliant by learning to take care of personal needs, to finish what is begun, and to clean up and put away materials.

Emotional

Teachers help a child feel wanted, loved and secure by providing structured freedom in this first school experience. They encourage a child's independence, individuality, self-concept, self-control, and self-reliance. They provide many media through which a child can constructively express feelings, manage personal needs, and develop problem-solving abilities. A supportive environment that fosters creativity at many levels and respects individual differences reinforces emotional health and stability.

Intellectual

Stories, finger plays, poems, dramatic play, music, science, nature, cooking experiences, games, and puzzles stimulate a child's intellectual development in every dimension. These experiences strengthen concentration, observation, and memory; encourage curiosity, reasoning, and a desire to learn; and provide a rich backdrop for development of essential language skills.

Spiritual

A child is a product of relationships with family, friends, and teachers. Relationships are especially significant in Christian learning: a child learns forgiveness by being forgiven; trust by finding adults trustworthy and fair; understanding by being understood and by having an opportunity for social experiences with loving adults and other children of the same age. In this process, children learn to value themselves as well as others. Children become aware of God as a reality in their own life and world by being with persons who express love, care, acceptance, and kindness through daily living and by experiencing and exploring nature. Our Preschool is an extension of the educational and outreach ministries of St. Andrew Lutheran Church, and age-appropriate elements of Christian education guide all curriculum areas.

Sanctuary Time is an important part of our Preschool program. Several times each month each class visits the sanctuary to hear Bible stories, sing songs and pray. Activities are kept simple and appropriate for preschoolers.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

The approach to discipline at St. Andrew Lutheran Preschool is an outgrowth of our philosophy on how young children learn, grow, and develop. We believe that a stimulating and loving environment that fully involves children, that affords them the right and ability to make real choices, and that protects the rights of each individual, promotes the development of inner controls and leads to self-discipline. Classroom rules are limited and are designed to protect persons and property and to promote pro-social behaviors such as sharing and turn-taking as children are developmentally able to comprehend and act on such concepts.

Mindful of our guidance philosophy explained above, we use positive reinforcement --- we recognize and encourage desired behaviors as our primary means for effective behavior management. If problems do arise, the teachers remind children in positive terms of acceptable behaviors (i.e. "Blocks are for building, not for throwing. Let's see what we can build with these blocks.") and redirect children's activity to an area that may be more calming or involving (i.e. water/sand play, playdough). Every effort is made to teach acceptable behavior choices and to model language the child can use to work out and negotiate a reasonable resolution to the situation. If necessary, a "time away" may be taken in the activity area and in the teacher's proximity where she can offer guidance and reassurance until the child can gain control of his/her behavior once more and rejoin our activities.

It is our belief that, while some behaviors cannot be accepted, each child must always be and feel accepted and loved. An example of patience, love, positive guidance and forgiveness is foundational to our ideals as a Christian early childhood program.

THE VALUE OF PLAY

Our program is founded on the belief that play is the most developmentally appropriate and productive avenue for young children's learning. It is the preschooler's way to explore the physical world, to relate to others: to organize ideas, knowledge and feelings; to adjust to the demands of the environment; and to release tensions and solve emotional problems. Because true play is inherently individual and has no pre-determined expectations, there can be no "failure" in play. Each child is free to succeed at self-chosen tasks, and this success leads to feelings of competence, self-worth, and willingness to try new things.

Every area of development is enhanced through self-directed play. Through play children develop physical skills and coordination of large and small muscles. They explore objects and materials and discover what can be done with them. They practice skills useful for later school learning: visual discrimination, recognition of patterns, refined hand and eye movements, etc. In stacking and building with blocks, children learn about spatial relationships, balance, weight, and gravity. In sand and water play, they explore concepts of volume, weight, and comparison. During dramatic play, children practice social roles, develop communication skills, and expand their understanding of their own and others' feelings. At a time when language ability is insufficient to fully convey feelings and frustrations, play provides an effective avenue for self-expression. Perhaps most importantly of all, children discover their own personality in play and develop confidence in their own ability to deal with the world around them.

Play has all the characteristics of a complete educational process. It secures concentration for a great length of time. It develops initiative, imagination and intense interest. There is complete emotional involvement. No other activity calls so fully on the resources of effort and energy within each child. Play is the most complete of all the educational processes, for it influences the intellect, the emotions, and the body of the child. A serious involvement in play leads to personal power.