

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

Parent Information

All young children should frequently be offered the following experiences:

- *Being intellectually engaged, absorbed, challenged.*
- *Having confidence in their own intellectual powers and their own questions.*
- *Being engaged in extended interactions (e.g. conversations, discussions, exchanges of views, arguments, planning.)*
- *Taking initiative in a range of activities and accepting responsibility for what is accomplished.*
- *Knowing the satisfaction that can come from overcoming obstacles and setbacks and solving problems.*
- *Helping others to find out things and to understand them better.*
- *Making suggestions to others and expressing appreciation of others' efforts and accomplishments.*
- *Applying their developing basic literacy and numeracy skills in purposeful ways.*
- *Feeling of belonging to a group of peers.*

Based on the work of Dr. Lilian Katz, professor emeritus at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. 2012.

Philosophy and Purpose

In-district preschoolers, who are found eligible for special education services and require a classroom placement to receive their instruction, are taught at Sprague School and are integrated into the Sprague community as appropriate. These students benefit by receiving instruction and therapeutic services by District employees who may continue to be their service providers into their early elementary years. Parents are also able to form relationships with these same teachers and therapists. The Early Childhood children benefit from creating relationships with older students and interacting with siblings as appropriate. This relationship helps the district address the strengths and needs of the whole child who, as a preschooler, is continually evolving and developing.

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Early Childhood Program Characteristics

Our Early Childhood Programs include, but are not limited to, the following characteristics:

- Individualized program;
- Team approach (Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Social Work);
- Growth promoted through play;
- Flexible and based on student needs;
- Ongoing assessments and diagnostic observations to provide insight on individual performance levels;
- Child-centered;
- Variety of research-based approaches, materials and techniques;
- Access to peer models;
- Comprehensive and integrative services focusing on the needs of the whole child;
- Ongoing communication with families and parent involvement opportunities;
- Scaffolded learning activities;
- Multi-sensory approaches; and natural networking opportunities with others in the community.

Eligibility and Placement in Early Childhood Programs

- **Early Childhood Self-Contained Classroom**

To become eligible for special education services, a 3-5 year old preschooler will undergo a multi-disciplinary evaluation. After the evaluation is complete, the assessment team, Early Childhood team, Local Educational Agency (LEA) representative, and parents will meet to determine if the child is eligible for special education services. The state has defined possible areas of eligibility with standards for each. Typical areas of development that are reviewed include: speech-language, social-emotional, fine/gross motor, cognitive/pre-academic skills, and adaptive skills.

Placement in the morning or afternoon Early Childhood programs is a team decision based on criteria (listed below). It is important to note that initial placement is typically in the morning self-contained class unless the newly eligible student is in his/her pre-kindergarten year. It is also important to note that the child's placement will be reviewed at each annual review IEP meeting.

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Criteria for the Early Childhood Self-Contained Classroom

Student:Teacher Ratio = 10:1 maximum with an associate

The incoming student:

- Is 3, 4 or 5 years of age;
- Needs individual teacher assistance with joint attention and demonstrating understanding in a group size of 3 or more students;
- May display dysregulation and behaviors that impede student learning and/or the learning of others;
- Demonstrates less than 20% of growth in basic concepts (colors, shapes, sizes, quantity, etc.) in a six -month instructional period.

• Early Childhood Blended Classroom

The Early Childhood Blended Classroom incorporates both general education and special education students. As is typical in preschool classrooms, all students spend time together learning and playing. Unique to this setting is that all students also have access to a therapeutic model that incorporates services, such as speech and language, occupational therapy, and social work.

The children are grouped by skill level for math and literacy instruction and are expected to gain knowledge in small and large group instruction. Preschool themes are also used to develop vocabulary and background knowledge. The children are expected to be able to participate in discussions with minimal adult assistance. Students will also develop social skills and group readiness behaviors throughout the year. For our special education students, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) defines specific goals that will be reported on three times annually.

In order to determine if the Early Childhood Blended Classroom is the best learning environment for a child, the following will be considered:

Criteria for Early Childhood Blended Classroom

Student:Teacher Ratio 15:1 with a teacher and associate teacher

The incoming student:

- Is 3, 4, or 5 years of age;
- Is able to attend and participate in groups of 4 or larger and demonstrate understanding with minimal adult assistance;
- Does not impede the learning of self or others through his/her behavior;
- Demonstrates more than 20% of growth in basic concepts (colors, shapes, sizes, quantity, etc.) in a six month instructional period.

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- **Community Peers – Blended Classroom**

Community Peers are an important part of our Early Childhood Blended Classroom. They serve as good language and social models for the IEP students and also benefit from being in a classroom that incorporates social skills, language enrichment, and fine and gross motor support.

Criteria for Community Peers in the Early Childhood Blended Classroom

The incoming student:

- Is 3 or 4 years of age by September 1st;
- Scores within age level expectations on Ages & Stages – 3 Questionnaire (Communication, Gross motor, Fine Motor, Problem-Solving, Personal/Social Skills);
- Will participate in a process involving a phone conference with parents, completion of information packet, and a visit to the Early Childhood Blended Classroom.

Parent Resources

Please contact the following District 103 staff should you have specific questions or need clarification on the information presented in this document.

Mrs. Julie Postma,
Director, Student Services
847-295-4030

Dr. Christy Adler
Principal, Sprague School
847-945-6665

Dr. Gina Finaldi
Asst. Director, Student
Services & Early Childhood
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847-295-4030

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Lincolnshire-Prairie View School District 103 is a nationally recognized elementary district serving approximately 1,750 students from Early Childhood through eighth grade. For more information about the district, visit www.d103.org, call (847) 295-4030, or send an e-mail message to Ask103@d103.org.