

8/31/10

Early Childhood Education Programs General Information

**Pilgrim Lutheran School
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Pilgrim Lutheran E.C. Department is recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education

Pilgrim Lutheran School serves the entire community. We admit students of any race, color or national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race color, or national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, and athletic and other school administered programs.

(Revised 8/31/10)

Pilgrim Lutheran School Early Childhood Philosophy and Objectives

WELCOME TO PILGRIM LUTHERAN SCHOOL

Pilgrim Lutheran School strives to provide a Christ-centered developmentally-appropriate program keeping the child's unique needs, interests, and abilities as our central focus.

Philosophy

Pilgrim Lutheran School strongly believes that young children teach themselves and each other best through play. Our play-based program strives to make children feel safe, powerful and loved. Because "all children within an age group should not be expected to arrive at each benchmark at the same time or to show mastery to the same degree of proficiency" (Illinois Early Learning Standards, Illinois State Board of Education, Div. of Early Childhood Education, 2002) Pilgrim does not set arbitrary universal goals but rather supports children as they achieve individual goals and meet individual challenges.

At Pilgrim, young children explore literature, math, science and social studies through developmentally appropriate hands-on experiences. Emergent literacy is encouraged through story writing, reading and dramatization. Emergent math skills are supported with manipulatives, as well as through game-playing and problem-solving. Children are exposed to a wide variety of process-oriented art experiences and encouraged to look for, and appreciate, art everywhere in the world around them.

Pilgrim believes that learning to form relationships and deal with conflict are essential components of early education. We strive to model Christian values so that children can succeed socially as well as academically. Pilgrim works intentionally to build a community of learners and this community includes not only Pilgrim staff and students but also families. Parental involvement is encouraged, nurtured and valued.

Objectives

We strive to...

1. Teach children that they are God's special creation, redeemed by Jesus Christ, nurtured in love by the Holy Spirit
2. Demonstrate God's love by creating an atmosphere of joy, acceptance and forgiveness
3. Foster awareness and respect for the feelings and rights of others and develop empathy for others
4. Encourage the expression of both positive and negative feelings, channeling the negative feelings into constructive expression
5. Provide an environment where children can build socialization skills and develop friendships while pursuing individual interests
6. Encourage verbal expression of ideas and realization of self as a source of ideas
7. Provide individual creative expression and experiences using art, music and dramatic play
8. Provide opportunities for the child to learn about their world
9. Provide opportunities to develop large and small motor skills
10. Provide each child with opportunities to experience a variety of forms of written and oral language
11. Provide opportunities for the child to construct mathematical understanding through the use of manipulative materials and problem-solving activities
12. Provide opportunities for the child to develop and strengthen listening skills
13. Provide opportunities for the child to develop independence by giving age-appropriate responsibilities

...so that each child will view school as a positive part of their lives.

ADMISSION - Children who are four years old by September 1 are eligible for admission to preschool, those 5 years old by September 1 are eligible for Kindergarten, and those 3 years old by September 1 are eligible for 3 & 4 year old PM program. Policy requires that children attending early childhood programs are toilet trained. Children wearing pull ups are not considered toilet trained.

MEDICAL CARD - The child is not allowed to attend classes until the required medical card with record of immunizations is submitted.

TUITION AND FEES - Tuition and fees are listed on the fee sheet available from the school office. Detailed information is provided in section 21 of the handbook. Children enrolled for three days per week in the 3 year old p.m. program do not all attend the same total number of days (e.g., school is not in session on Fridays and Mondays more often than on other days). Tuition is nonetheless the same for all three day 3 year old p.m. enrollees.

DRESS - The program includes many on-the-floor and hands-on activities. Clothing appropriate for such activities is recommended.

Children build confidence in caring for their own needs if they are dressed in clothing that does not require special fastening from the teacher or other adults. This need to develop independence should be given special consideration when selecting clothing.

HOME VISITATION - The preschool teacher will make home visits to each newly-enrolled child before classes begin in the fall. Preschoolers who were previously enrolled at Pilgrim will be invited to visit school shortly before the first day. This gives the teacher and students an opportunity to become acquainted (or reacquainted) before the school year begins. Kindergarten children and their families will also be invited to school before classes begin in order to become acquainted (or reacquainted) with their classmates, teacher and room.

HOURS - Doors open for preschool and kindergarten children at 8:40 A.M. Classroom activities begin at 8:45 A.M. Children should not be left unattended in the classroom if the teacher is not present. Dismissal for morning programs is at 11:45 A.M. Children enrolled only in 3-4 year-old afternoon program arrive at 12:30 P.M. Dismissal for afternoon programs is at 2:45 P.M.

EARLY ARRIVAL - An early bird arrival program is available at a nominal cost. Children may arrive for this program anytime between 7:15 A.M. and 8:40 A.M. Children receive safe and positive adult supervision in the basement auditorium area. Children may be registered on a daily use or on an occasional use basis. No child, even if accompanied by a parent, should be in the classrooms before 8:40AM unless special arrangements have been made with the teacher.

P.A.S. - PILGRIM AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM - After school childcare is available until as late as 6:00 P.M. for children enrolled in Pilgrim School. Monthly or daily fees are assessed depending on use. Contact the school office for additional information.

AFTERNOON OPTION - Preschool and Kindergarten children enrolled in the afternoon program eat lunch at Pilgrim (bring a sack lunch or purchase hot lunch) and are dismissed from the P.M. program at 2:45 P.M. An additional tuition is charged.

WORSHIP - Weekly chapel services are held on Wednesday at 9:55 A.M with the lower grades and upper grades taking turns leading the services. Parents, family and friends are invited to worship with us.

The Pilgrim Lutheran Church community worships together on Sunday at 8:00 A.M. and 10:30 A.M. During the months of June, July, and August there is one service at 9:30 A.M. We encourage you to worship with us together as a family.

Sunday School for children 3 years of age to grade 5 is offered 9:15 to 10:15 A.M. each Sunday excepting Memorial Day through Labor Day. Nursery service is also available during the 10:30 A.M. service. Discussion for adults is held at 9:15 A.M. on Sunday mornings.

COMMUNICATION AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

One important factor in the success of our program is parent involvement and open communication between parents and staff. Some aspects of that communication are:

1. Calendars are sent home listing weekly and monthly themes and snack assignments.
2. Classrooms are experimenting with classroom web pages. Individual teachers use these as is appropriate for their classroom.
3. A school newsletter (Pilgrim's Pink Page) is sent via e-mail each week.
4. Written observations of each preschool and kindergarten child are sent in January and June. Children enrolled in the EC program will receive a written observation at the end of the year.
5. Individual parent conferences are held in October and March for preschool and kindergarten children. Conferences for EC children are held in January.

6. Parents are encouraged to contact the classroom teacher with questions concerning their child. No question is unimportant. Teachers can be reached at school between 8:00 A.M. and 8:30 A.M. and 3:00 and 3:30 P.M. Teachers are also available at home. Teacher's home telephone numbers are found in the school directory. Please be considerate of teachers' personal time when calling their homes.
7. Parents are always welcome in the classroom. Parents may volunteer in a variety of ways determined each year by the teacher. Information about volunteering will be available at the September Open House and in the weekly newsletter.

Following are excerpts from our Early Childhood Curriculum. They are intended to give you an overview of how Pilgrim puts its philosophy into action.

(First four descriptions apply to all Early Childhood classes)

Free Choice

At the beginning of each learning session children have the opportunity to choose their activity. This free choice allows children to make the transition from parent/caregiver to school by offering a variety of activities intended to be an inviting introduction to the day ahead. Hands-on activities that encourage interaction and exploration are set up. Some examples of these free choice activities are geoboards, magnets, paint mixing, clay, puzzles, blocks, art materials for free form projects, books, housekeeping and socializing with classmates. Activities are planned to support children's interests as well as the daily curriculum. Teachers or classroom volunteers make themselves available to support and guide some activities such as new games, story dictation, science experiments and more involved art activities.

Religion

Preschoolers and kindergarteners are naturally curious about God, their relationship to God, and their life as a child of God. Their many questions about God arise throughout the day in all curricular areas. Our aim is to integrate the religion curriculum so that God will be a natural part of the entire learning process. This can be achieved through the use of songs, finger plays, Bible stories, role-playing with props, art projects, prayers and stories. It can be achieved through regular Bible story time, snack time prayer, weekly worship with an older chapel partner, leading whole school worship and teacher-modeled behavior of forgiveness and acceptance.

Early Childhood Science Lab Curriculum

Preschoolers and kindergarteners are scientists. They question and explore their past, present and future worlds, along with everything in these worlds. Science gives them the opportunity to construct and apply their knowledge, and to expand their thinking. Science is taught in a variety of ways. Science is presented as a project, or develops from natural curiosity stimulated by books, discussions, art projects and classroom play. Science is both child- and teacher-led.

Physical Education

Physical fitness is an important component of early childhood education that stimulates cognitive development, provides opportunities for body awareness and creates situations for alternative curriculum integration and assessments. Non-competitive gym games allow children to experience the benefits of teamwork and cooperation. Three to six year-olds are often kinesthetic learners; movement activities stimulate their learning process.

Preschool Overview

Because preschool is a child's introduction to the world of school, it is important to create an environment in which the child feels safe and successful. By creating this atmosphere we allow children the freedom to explore and learn in ways that are developmentally appropriate. Young children need a combination of free time and structure so they can learn to choose activities and playmates as well as focus on an assigned task. Pilgrim's preschool curriculum focuses on thinking, problem-solving and learning through experience rather than memorization and teacher-led activities.

Daily Routines

Job Chart- It is important for young children to take responsibility. Being given the responsibility of a "job" makes children feel successful and capable.

Circle Time-

Calendar- Supports understanding of numeration and one-to-one correspondence as well as beginning understanding of days, weeks, months and seasons.

Attendance- Children think about the presence or absence of others. Gives children a way to experiment with "finding their voice" in a group.

Use of foreign languages- Supports awareness of other cultures.

Morning Message- Children review activities of the day, watch letters and words formed as the teacher writes the message, and search for the letter of the week.

Stories- Children learn to make connections between themselves and the world as well as thinking ahead and predicting. Vocabulary-building and problem-solving skills also are strengthened.

Discussions- These promote deeper understanding of themes and concepts, and allow children to learn from peers. Teaches respect and turn-taking.

Themes/Projects

Themes and projects are intended to cover areas of interest expressed by the children, as well as teacher-selected concepts that are developmentally important and appropriate.

Art

Art is one of the most important ways for young children to express themselves. The end product as viewed/judged by adults is not what is important but rather how the child feels about the process, his/her involvement in it and what he/she learns from and feels about it. Much of the art in preschool is created during free choice. Over the course of a week, a month and the year, a wide variety of tools and materials are available to the children. The teacher is available to help but the children are allowed to experiment and create individually and independently. Pre-mixed paint colors are not used but rather just the primary colors along with black and white for tinting and shading. The children are given their own trays of paint to mix and use as they desire. Primary and secondary colors are explored as a group early in the year so the children have the knowledge to create their own world of color.

Art also is used as a way for the children to react to stories, experiences and emotions. Children often are asked to draw what they have heard, felt or seen. This not only allows the children to express themselves but also builds small motor skills and requires attention to detail. Drawing is an important precursor to writing and a good assessment tool when monitored over time.

Emergent Literacy

Literacy skills emerge at different speeds and in different ways in each child. Our goal is for children to learn that letters can enhance their world. We aim to teach children that words can give them information, safety and enjoyment. By exposing our children to fact and fiction, modern stories and stories from the past, humor and drama, we hope to motivate them to yearn to read and to understand that there is a vast written world to explore. Children are given access to books to explore either by themselves or with a reader (teacher, classroom volunteer or older student).

Although letter recognition is supported and encouraged, we believe the understanding of letters and how they sound and are used is more important. These concepts are taught through games, songs, book discussions, a word wall, the morning message and many opportunities that come up spontaneously throughout the course of the day.

Math

Math in our preschool class is mostly about exploring and discovering the meaning and use that numbers (and other mathematical concepts) can have. We do not focus on drilling numeral recognition into children's heads. Instead they are exposed to numbers in fun, interesting and meaningful ways (games, calendars, graphs, for example). They learn not only to recognize the numerals but more important, what they stand for and what they can do.

Here are a few examples of math activities and the reasons behind them:

<u>Sorting</u>	One-to-one correspondence, builds classification skills, strengthens ability to recognize and consider more than one characteristic (very important problem-solving skill)
<u>Graphing</u>	Builds understanding that numerical information can be put into more organized and useful forms, beginning data analysis, especially good for visual learners
<u>Calendar</u>	Basic counting, one-to-one correspondence, sequencing, sets (weeks, months, years), basic understanding of charts and tables (also teaches importance of reading concept of moving/reading from left to right)
<u>Patterns</u>	Foundation for multiplication, geometry
<u>Blocks</u>	Geometry, basic fractions
<u>Games</u>	Counting, one-to-one correspondence, number value, numeral recognition, beginning addition and subtraction, problem-solving, strategy formation

Kindergarten Overview

Daily Routines

Routine is a necessary and appreciated part of a 5- to 6-year-old's school experience. It creates self-confidence, responsibility for classroom jobs, eagerness for the day to carry on and shared learning with classmates.

Kindergarten group time is a daily classroom routine following **free choice**.

Components of **group time** may include:

Question of the Day: Name recognition, getting to know your classmates, sharing experiences, graphing and estimation skills

Riddle of the Day: Word play discussion, laughter

Calendar Activities: Word recognition, counting, ordinals, numeral writing, sequencing, pattern recognition

Growing Number Line: Number recognition, place value, counting by 1s, 5s and 10s, patterns, number value

Number Fun: Oral and visual math discussions

Let's Think: Deductive reasoning, patterns, counting, left/right

Share Time: Sharing home/life events, group participation, question asking and answering

Themes

Themes are used to coordinate most of the curricular areas of the kindergarten day. This assists the 5- and 6 year-old child in understanding that all areas of life work together and are connected. The use of themes also allows social studies concepts to be incorporated in language arts and science activities.

Kindergarten Café

Cooking can give 5- and 6-year-olds a wonderful sense of accomplishment. They see the results of their labors and creativity immediately. They practice measuring and estimating. They note changes in matter. They learn cooperation and patience. They develop a real sense of pride.

Mathematics

Number explorations, math conversations, use of manipulatives, and verbal counting are some of the parts of a healthy, well-rounded mathematics curriculum for 5- and 6-year-olds. Math explorations and discussions occur throughout the entire early childhood curriculum.

Topics

1. Counting of 20 or more objects in an arbitrary arrangement
2. Interrupted verbal counting beyond 100
3. Counting by 2s, 5s and 10s
4. Reading and writing any number 100 or less
5. Meaning of addition and subtraction, generally with oral rather than written exercises—in real situations, in children’s own number stories, in oral problems, and with concrete objects, on number lines
6. Meaning of division as equal sharing
7. Equivalence as acting out a variety of ways of expressing the same number (e.g., 6 as $2 + 4$, $5 + 1$, $7 - 1$)
8. Non-computational uses of numbers through daily experience (counting snacks, children, days until; measuring length, weight, elapsed time, cost, value; having reference frames [clock, calendar, temperature, ordinal numbers])
9. Estimating (About how many? About how much? About what cost?)
10. Fractions
11. Simple data collection and graphing
12. Basic geometric concepts (recognition of basic figures, names of basic figures, planes and solids, pattern block activities)
13. Use of calculators (counting with the repeat key, making and reading numbers, occasional use of calculator to solve “big” problems that arise in the classroom)

Language Arts—Reading, Writing, Oral Expression

5- and 6-year-olds learn to read and write in different ways. They may learn by sight word recognition, word configuration, phonemic awareness or picture clues. The curriculum strives to provide language experiences in all the ways children learn to read and write. Included are big books, shared reading, phonemic awareness activities, letter recognition and letter sound recognition. Children learn through poetry, book discussion, songs, finger plays, plays and oral reading. Self-expression is encouraged through group story writing, individual journals, story notebooks for dictation, poetry writing and the acting out of stories. A student ABC book is used to reinforce learning. Phonics games are played. Use of slates and

chalk, dry erase boards, crayons, pencils, markers and other writing tools promote eye-hand and small motor control.

4- to 5-Year-Old P.M. Program

The 4-, 5-, and 6-year-old afternoon program provides learning activities and interaction in a less structured environment. Themes are used to help coordinate learning. Themes are teacher-introduced or child-suggested. Each child has time to listen to and discuss books, participate in art, drama, and music activities, try science explorations, play board games and choose his or her own activity. Every child also shares his or her favorite book on a monthly basis.

For further information about our curriculum please ask to see a copy of our curriculum. For more complete information about school policies and procedures please refer to the Parent Handbook.