

Berkshire Country Day School

Program of Studies

Preschool
2019-2020

PRESCHOOL

BCD's Preschool program, inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, provides a nurturing and stimulating educational environment for young children. Self-confidence and the ability to work with others develops with each new experience. A child-centered curriculum supports each student's learning style and developmental readiness, engaging them in activities and play that sparks imagination and builds independence. Children are provided with continual opportunities for exploring, discovering, and learning about themselves, others, and their community.

Ms. Carli Imreh-Allgretta (Beginner 2s)

Ms. Kristina Hallock & Ms. Eleanor Rochman (Beginner 3s and 4s)

The child-centered curriculum supports individual learning styles and developmental readiness, and engages children in activities and play that sparks imagination, builds independence, and constructs meaning of their world. Children are provided with continual opportunities for exploring, discovering, and learning about themselves, others, and their community.

Our youngest learners are deeply respected and viewed as competent, creative problem solvers who are filled with imagination and a sense of wonder. Preschool children enter a warm and nurturing environment that supports exploration, self-expression, and caring relationships. Each new experience promotes thoughtful investigation, self-confidence and collaboration skills. Learning at this age is integrated across the disciplines of music, dramatic play, art, blocks, science, storytelling, and math.

Our Preschool program is inspired by the Reggio Emilia method, an approach to learning that fosters transformative deep divergent thinking, empathy and relationships to one another and the natural world, and learning through the natural world around us.

The Preschool teacher views herself as part of a team, working with both the children and their families to create a learning community. The teacher is a facilitator of and collaborator in the learning process. She listens deeply to children's words, engages children in questioning, and provides diverse materials to further children's wonderings. Children learn about democratic living as teachers and families work with them to make choices about their learning. Children are also empowered to express themselves in many ways – through talking, movement, gestures, singing, dancing, rhythm, art, drama, and manipulation of many materials.

The classroom environment is considered a teacher, as well, and it provides an aesthetically pleasing space with natural materials for stimulating, tactile exploration and transformative, symbolic thinking. Plants contribute to this environment and help children develop empathy by tending to them daily.

The Preschool classroom is a place where fantasy play is supported. It is through individual exploration that children construct meaning of their world. Our Preschool environment supports play (learning) by providing unstructured time, through social interactions, and with intentional

queries, all with the goal of children performing independently. The teacher documents children's journeys of discovery and expression with photographs, dictation, and then creates portfolios to be shared with the children and with the other adults in their lives.

The daily schedule reflects an understanding of the needs of young children. A transition area at the entrance to the classroom is a quiet place for a parent and child who may need some extra time together before school. Snack, playground time, lunch, rest, music, PE and library are regularly scheduled blocks to give children the structure of predictable times during their day. All other times indoors and outside are more organic, giving children opportunities for deep and meaningful investigations.

Children work both individually and as a community. The Reggio approach encourages long term projects and open-ended investigations. By focusing on one concept over time and observing it from different perspectives, teachers and children learn that there are always new ways to look at even ordinary things and that we all can learn to appreciate many sides. Working together to express, see, and hear different perspectives also models how we build relationships. Having different points of view gives children more possibilities for understanding one another.

Because Reggio-inspired methodology is integrated throughout the Preschool day, there are no traditional classifications of subjects. "Language Arts" is, more broadly, "communication arts," and children learn to express their feelings, ideas, experiences, and stories through words, drama, music, movement, and art. Verbal communication in the form of stories, poems, books, and plays supports language development within the wider scope of community living which, in turn, promotes the more traditional social studies program as they continue into BCD's older grades. Auditory and visual recognition of letters and sounds are integrated as developmentally appropriate.

Math and science are intricately woven together to promote the skills of observation and prediction and of classifying objects regarding various attributes, sequencing, patterning, measuring, estimating, and comparing. Children engage in a hands-on exploration of manipulatives and beginning number concepts. These investigations are furthered with pinecones, leaves, twigs, and other materials from outside. Teacher-child interactions frequently involve noting shapes, numerals, and quantity within various activities and as children engage in play throughout the day.

The Reggio approach promotes students' becoming aware of and using all their senses. Hearing, speaking and visualizing, for example, are developed by listening to the sounds of music in nature, analyzing its rhythms and patterns, and transforming those ideas through painting or movement. Touch and empathy (a sixth sense) are enhanced by feeling different textures of tree bark and discussing what animals might be living there. Cooking helps students learn about nutrition, measurement, and taste, and encourages children to make connections with the plant world. The rhythms of the day, of the weather patterns, and of the changing seasons, as well as the play of light and shadow on the pond, the warm breezes and frosty winds, and the sounds and textures of the rain and snow, are all rich material for investigation and transformative thinking through the many languages of children. Children in the Preschool classroom listen, see, touch, taste, and smell the natural world around them and create their own interpretations through stories, painting, clay, music, dance, movement, and drama.

Children have a broad variety of materials to use for communicating their ideas, enhancing sensory awareness, and developing both fine and large motor development. The classroom has fabrics, musical instruments, blocks, pencils, crayons, paints, scissors, clay, glue, and paper to supplement our acorns, seashells, twigs, stones, and other materials from the natural environment. In all their work, children focus on the process rather than the final product.

The Preschool classroom is a place where children become independent thinkers, compassionate citizens, and creative problem-solvers.

Special subjects

Beginner 2s (B2)

The B2s will experience music, movement, art, and varied physical activity under the guidance of their classroom teaching team. Additionally, the B2s will have weekly music classes with the BCD music teacher.

Preschool (B3 & B4)

The PS class begin to have weekly visits from some of the BCD specialist teachers. They B3s also go to the gym for physical education with the PE teacher, to the Art Studio for art and to the music room for music twice weekly.

music

Ms. Natalia Bernal

The music curriculum for Preschool and Lower School students is based on the belief that each child can do well and enjoy music in a supportive environment that fosters creativity and freedom of expression.

Preschool children participate in a wide range of musical activities that include listening, dancing, simple instrumental work, and singing. While singing is planned as the basic activity, the lessons often include art, dance, and drama. Movement is a central part of this class.

physical education

Mr. Jordan Storti

The physical education program for Preschool is separated into three areas of development: equipment play, a theme for the month, and small games. Equipment-play activities help develop the abilities children need to participate in actual sports later on. Small equipment-play activities include: balls, hoops, ropes, cones, bean bags, balloons, and scarves. Large equipment-play activities may include: parachutes, tires, scooters, mats, beams, and the climbing wall.

Each physical education class has a theme, so we can concentrate on an area appropriate for three to five-year-olds. We observe how they improve their motor skills, listening skills, ability to follow directions, and memory retention. A theme will usually last four weeks. Themes include:

signals, animals, shapes and pathways, obstacle courses, ball skills, stunts, alphabet letters, and exercises.

To finish each class, the children gather for a small game that is fun and designed to promote positive interaction among the group. Small games include: Pac Man, Gingerbread Man, and Two-Headed Monster.

Because Preschool students typically spend much of their PE time outdoors, they should always be dressed appropriately for the weather.