

Spectrum Early Childhood- QUESTION: What Does This Mean?

ANSWER

Early Childhood = PreK-K-1

Preschool: Ages 3- 4 (generally)

Early Elementary: Ages 5- 6 (generally K-1)

As families toured and interviewed for preschool these last few months, many had the chance to hear our vision for Early Childhood this coming year. However, families who have been here need this update.

We are still focusing strongly on progressive, whole-child strategies. What this means to us is that each individual child is experiencing school - tasks, learning opportunities, social opportunities, identity and emotional development, based on who they are and where they are on their own unique developmental continuum. We are not comparing them to “standards” or to each other. Preschool is about preschool. Being three should be about loving being three, not getting ready to be four. Same goes for four, and five, and six. Being actively engaged in learning helps children learn to learn, and to learn to love learning for its own sake.

Our team is keenly expert about what children need to become successful readers, mathematicians, scientists, thinkers, artists, and musicians. Mostly this involves fostering imagination, inquiry, experiential learning (that includes reflection) and loving a learning process which is social and joyful.

About our Early Childhood Team:

- Jacque Lind is our Early Elementary (K-1) teacher. She is a long time veteran of Spectrum, and as such is leading the entire Early Childhood team. Her leadership, with Claire Rotolo's and my support, will strengthen coherence, ensure flexible and meaningful groupings, and support teachers and staff.
- LaShonta and Shelley are Preschool teachers.
- Kristin, Heather, and Isabel are teaching assistants for the department
- Additional music sessions and integration will occur from our music teacher Ms. Sue
- Ms. Claire, our Education Committee Chair and Early Childhood expert, will plug in as we need her, especially on days when we have the highest number of preschool students enrolled, so we can continue small group learning opportunities. .

Unlike last year, we will return to mixing and mingling children in flexible groups. This will be based on individual student readiness and need, as well as teacher and staff passions and strengths. For instance, Ms. Shelley has much experience with nature and outdoor learning. Ms. Jacque is simply the best educator in the world at “Plan-Do-Review.” Heather is amazing at teaching children crafts. LaShonta has deep experience with small group learning, and expertly integrates science and movement as well as cuing verbal directions with physical gestures. Kristen brings a love for the outdoors, strong organization and the capacity to support individuals, and Isabel brings positive cues, a calming demeanor, and an acceptance of differences in children.

Schedules will be similar across PreK-1 with flexible groupings. This will allow more flexibility in how we address learning needs- academic and social.

Nature-based and play-based approaches will be emphasized. Learning centers and stations will be themed throughout three classrooms and Commons, with outdoor stations and nature activities as well. As you have heard, our overall school theme this year is **EXPLORE**.

We are launching a ***Spectrum Staff Shares*** video series on YouTube. The first will focus on early childhood. The three below have already been posted:

[Why Spectrum?](#) - Our most veteran teacher (who is also a Spectrum parent and grandparent) shares her insights and reasoning for why Spectrum is so great.

[Typical Day](#) Ms. Jacque walks through a day of kindergarten.

[Ownership of Learning](#) Many do not believe that young children are capable of independence planning, problem solving, decision making, creativity, and collaboration. We do. Hear a little bit how and why this is so important to us.

Children are children. Some may need more time on something while others come knowing and are ready for more. Some may have skills and concepts being taught to others, but need more social-emotional development opportunities, like learning to listen to others, or learning to share.

What we want to most assure you as parents and grandparents is that we care deeply for your children and want to partner with you as we embark on or continue this amazing journey of early learning. We welcome, even expect, your ongoing insight, feedback, presence, and participation.

Spectrum was founded by parents who wanted experiential, active, engaging learning for their children. Nearly 54 years later, Spectrum is still delivering on this visionary promise.