



Curriculum

The curriculum followed in our program is “The Creative Curriculum,” which is aligned to the State of Illinois’ Early Learning Standards. These standards are the framework upon which the program is built. Active engagement is one of the hallmarks of learning obtained through exploration, social-emotional learning, creative, gross/motor and play-based activities. The Creative Curriculum is a research-based program, with learning opportunities centered around the whole child. Studies are built into the curriculum and last around 5-8 weeks depending on children’s interest levels. We start by exploring the topic, investigating questions surrounding the topic, and we celebrate our learning with a special event or activity. Some examples of studies we have investigated in the past include: Trees, Simple Machines, Clothing, Exercise, Pets, and Buildings.

Social-Emotional learning is at the forefront of early childhood education. To teach social emotional skills and foster positive behavior in the preschool classroom, District 80 uses Second Step and The Pyramid Model. Second Step helps our young learners with listening, paying attention, managing behavior, and getting along with peers. The Pyramid Model is a research-based tiered approach that fosters inclusion of students and provides support to students who need it. One of the standout tools built into the Pyramid Model is “Tucker the Turtle.” Tucker the Turtle provides a scripted story to teach young children how to calm down when they have strong feelings by tucking into their shell and taking deep breaths. This, and many other toolkit items, provide our Tiger Tots with the foundation to cope through emotions and demonstrate positive behavior at school.

The teachers in our program are trained on The Creative Curriculum and the Pyramid Model in order to best provide age-appropriate instruction and universal support to all children.

Assessment

We use Teaching Strategies Gold as our assessment tool in our Preschool Program. Child assessment is a vital component of high-quality early childhood education programs. The department supports programs and educators in using assessments to do what is best for young children. An ongoing assessment process is essential for gathering information about children to better inform instruction, classroom practice, and observation. Teachers are able to determine each child’s level of skills and abilities by consistently analyzing and evaluating observation notes and portfolio samples. Sufficient documentation should be collected to accurately support assessment of each individual child’s knowledge, skills, and abilities.