

First Presbyterian Church Early Preschool

Vision, Values, & Validation Statement

Vision: *Our Foundation*

First Presbyterian Early Preschool values all people as unique children of God. We endeavor to be a community of life-long learners where children, families, and relationships are respected, nurtured, and highly esteemed. God's grace is the foundation of this community.

Mark 12:30-31 "Love God and love your neighbor as yourself."

Values: *Embracing and Valuing Childhood*

With joy, we value childhood as a sacred developmental stage. We view children as capable, competent and rich in potential. Children and teachers build trusting and nurturing relationships which help children thrive. A safe environment empowers each child to grow in confidence in their own abilities through purposeful play, curious exploration, and self-expression through multiple disciplines. The values of cooperation, kindness, forgiveness, peace, caring, negotiation, and perseverance build a strong foundation for healthy life skills.

Value 1- *Learning Through Play: Powerful Interactions*

Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact with the world around them.

Play fosters social-emotional growth through positive framing, guidance, and empathetic conflict resolution. This approach supports risk taking, self-confidence, and creating friendships.

"Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity." ~Kay Redfield Jamison

Value 2- *Outdoor Exploration: Expanding the Horizons*

The 65+ acres available to us on the site of First Presbyterian Church in Nashville along with Oak Hill School is a wonder-filled campus that provides us with many safe opportunities for exploration of natural developing creeks, bamboo stands, trees, hills, and open spaces for running. We can also find a ropes course, barns with horses, a Biblical Garden, herb garden and other developed areas on our grounds.

Our playground features a traditional play structure, swings, tricycles, and a sensory table with a rubberized surface. It also has a "natural" side that includes raised bed garden, a mud kitchen, a water table and a play structure for toddlers. Grass is the primary surface of this part of the playground.

We do not save outdoor play for "fair weather" days. We go outside to experience all types of weather conditions (rain, snow, hot, cold, windy, etc)

“Nature helps to calm and focus children, enabling them to form and strengthen those relationships with their world that are so important to their development.” Mary S. Rivkin, *The Great Outdoors*

Value 3- The Whole Child: Our Curriculum

We believe that individualizing instruction for each child is important; we use a blended approach to curriculum development. This approach allows us to utilize specific parts of a curriculum, but not adhere to the whole program.

Emergent Curriculum

Emergent Curriculum is an approach that is open ended and responsive to children’s interests. Children’s interests are used to plan the curriculum, in contrast to teachers planning the curriculum around a theme without input from children. Emergent Curriculum is a form of “intentional and responsive teaching that is inspired by and responsive to children’s ideas, facilitated by teacher’s, flexible and documentable. (NAEYC publication, *Young Children*, March 2018, page 69)

Our daily planning is guided by the principles of Emergent Curriculum. We encourage learning activities that spring from children’s interests, teacher’s interest, wondering questions, conversation, or unexpected events. This cultivates an environment where curiosity thrives and children develop a love of learning.

From pedagogical (the art of teaching: how children think and learn) observation, reflection and documentation information is gathered. This provides a scaffolding approach to planning intentional learning opportunities that build developmentally appropriate skills.

Tennessee Early Learning Standards (TN ELDS)

The TN ELDs were developed by the state of Tennessee and revised in 2013. As part of a 3 star program, we utilize these standards to inform our assessment of each child’s progress on developmental objectives and plan activities that will scaffold and build skills along a developmental continuum.

(<https://www.tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards/early-learning-development-standards.html>)

Handwriting Without Tears (HWT)

Because of the increase in use of electronics (key boards and smart phones) to “write” lists, stories and correspondence, the Early Preschool began using Handwriting Without Tears a few years ago to more formally teach proper letter and number formation. Wooden shapes (big line, little line, big curve, little curve), magnetic Stamp and See Screen, and chalk board work are some of the tools used to practice handwriting. (Since that time the HWT company has expanded its curriculum to include math and literacy and changed its name to Learning Without Tears. We still only use the Handwriting portion of the program.)[<https://www.lwtears.com>]

“As a rule, research states that learning how to write by hand is a necessary early motor exercise for other cognitive and physical skills. It helps develop eye-hand coordination skills and boosts brain development at a greater rate among young children (Saperstein Associates 2012; James and Gauthier 2006; James 2012; Berninger 2012). Handwriting is a foundation skill that needs to be developed early as it affects students’ reading, writing, language use, and critical thinking.”

Young Children & Worship

Chapel Time attends to the spiritual needs of each child and every class participates weekly. We use a multi-sensory approach to worship using the curriculum, Young Children & Worship. The class moves to our Worship Center which provides a special place for them to experience, encounter and worship God. Bible Stories are the center of the worship experience and are told using simple but beautiful objects of wood, paper, and felt. Follow-up wondering questions provide space for children to encounter God and stimulate curiosity. The class receives a version of the story to retell, touch, and work with while in their classroom. Children learn the art of using religious language through parable and sacred story, and practice silence, prayer, and centering life around the Christian church year. [<http://www.childrenandworship.org/>]

“Spiritual development is associated with positive emotions and qualities of thriving that include a sense of belonging, optimism, elevation, and a connection to “something larger” that gives purpose and meaning to life.”
from Lisa Miller, Ph.D., “The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving”

- **Fine Arts**

Visual art, music, and movement, are fundamental ways that children express themselves, develop, and learn. Our Fine Arts Studio is a place where children explore the arts once a week. Through a variety of experiences, children interact with multiple mediums, an assortment of musical genres, instruments, composers and artists. Our Fine Arts Studio is also available for special classroom projects and free art exploration.

“Exposure to music from early childhood onwards helps children to speak more clearly, develop a larger vocabulary, and strengthen social and emotional skills. “ Novak Djokovic Foundation

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.” Pablo Picasso

Value 4 - Community: Building Life-Long Learners

We are all learners; children, teachers, parents, and administration alike. Our hope is that each family will be deeply connected with their child’s learning experience and gain a clear understanding as their child as a learner. Parents are supported and encouraged to be a part of the classroom as well as the school. Various opportunities are available to serve in a variety of ways.

“Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.” Albert Einstein

Value 5 – Family Engagement: Connecting Through Relationships

Validation: Dedication to our Values

NAEYC ACCREDITATION

The Early Preschool’s accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) ensures our families and staff that the program is the highest standard nationally recognized for high quality care and education. High quality early learning is based on best practices and developmentally appropriate

methods that are research based. Our accreditation also means we will continually review and modify our policies, practices, and methods in accordance with current research.