



Whittier Wildflowers Preschool Curriculum

Whittier Wildflowers preschool is a play-based thematic/academically enriched program that thoughtfully and purposefully teaches skills through hands-on activities in a Christian environment. During our entire school day teaching is occurring through a creative, fun and exciting manner.

Our Curriculum is a theme based holistic approach to learning that follows the Minnesota Early Learning Standards developed by the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Human Services. We also reference other nationally accredited curriculums such as Creative Curriculum and Ages and Stages.

We believe children develop on a continuum therefore the following descriptions of goals for specific ages may vary child to child and modifications and adaptations may occur depending on the needs of each individual child. Our rigorous curriculum advances with each age group, as we focus on the following developmental skills throughout any given day.

- **Social/Emotional Development**
- **Approaches to Learning**
- **Language/Literacy Development (emergent reading and writing)**
- **Cognitive Development:**
 - **Mathematics and Logical thinking**
 - **Science (scientific thinking and problem solving)**
 - **Social Studies**
- **Creating and the Arts**
- **Physical Development**
 - **Gross Motor**
 - **Fine Motor**
 - **Physical health/well-being**
 - **Nutrition**

Social and Emotional Development: Whittier Wildflowers believes the social and emotional development of a young child is crucial to learning other concepts. If the child feels confident and safe they will naturally show interest in learning. This area of learning encompasses children learning about themselves, as well as their interactions and relationships with peers, teachers and other adults in their lives. We help encourage friendships, solve conflicts and learn to function well within group settings. Teaching **Emotional Development** is designed to encourage children to begin to recognize and describe their own emotions, increase the use of words instead of actions to express themselves and begin to understand and respond to others feelings. Teaching **Self Concept** to a child allows independence through awareness of one's abilities. Teaching **Relationship Development** allows children to learn how to easily interact with other children and participate within a group. Our teachers do this through a variety of interactive games and activities throughout the day, one example would be by practicing different roles in the dramatic play area...such as creating a pizza parlor, one child makes pizza, one child serves and one child becomes the customer. This teaches the skills of cooperation, sharing and expressing interest in others.

Approaches to Learning: Whittier Wildflowers believes it is important to understand each child's unique style of learning, thus we explore learning through a variety of lenses. We believe the goals within learning are not limited to the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, but also address the development of positive attitudes and dispositions. We do this by observing and teaching the skills of curiosity, risk-taking, use of imagination and invention, persistence and reflection and personal interpretation.

Language and Literacy Development: Whittier Wildflowers is proud of the early literacy component that is interwoven into all aspects of the day. Teachers assist in developing spoken language, written language and reading readiness. **Spoken language** develops differently for each child. During a child's time at Whittier Wildflowers our goal is to encourage children to speak in sentences, speak clearly enough so anyone can understand, confidently ask questions, and enjoy telling stories. **Written language development or Emergent Writing** is an understanding that writing is a way to communicate. During the preschool years at Whittier Wildflowers children will learn to identify their first and last name in writing, ability to print their name, recognize the letters of the alphabet (in and out of order), have the understanding that words are written in both upper and lower case letters, and gain the knowledge that letters make up words. **Reading Readiness or Emergent Reading** starts with spending time in class looking at picture books and simple written stories where the children pretend to read, to being able to repeat a short sentence, retell a story in sequence, answer short questions about a story and understand that one reads from left to right.

Mathematics and Logical Thinking: Whittier Wildflowers gives multiple opportunities throughout the school day for learning math concepts. The focus is on the children's curiosity about the world and their ability to acquire, organize and use information. The concepts we cover include; **Number Concepts**, which demonstrates increased interest in and awareness of numbers, counting and sequencing. **Patterns and Relationships**, which is the recognition and/or the ability to copy a pattern, as well as, sorting objects into groups. **Spatial Relationships and Geometry**, which is the ability to identify and name common shapes and understand the use of space (i.e. filling and emptying a bucket with different size items). **Measurement**, which is the recognition that objects can be measured by height, length, weight and time, as well as, understand size, position and direction (i.e. big and little, up and down).

Science: Preschool age children learn science by exploring the world around them. Therefore, Whittier Wildflowers introduces concepts of **scientific thinking and problem solving** through a variety of materials in the classroom. Children are encouraged to explore their curiosity by trying new things, see how they work, experiment and ask questions. Depending on the season and/or the monthly theme you will see different concepts being explored. For example during a unit on **Physical Science**, children may learn about the five senses, explore how things work, move, change, learn how to use magnets and how they work, or learn why blue and red make purple. During a unit on **Life Science**, children learn about living things, by growing grass, playing with snow in the sensory bin, planting seeds, or learn about life cycles (ex. Butterflies).

Social Studies: Whittier Wildflowers children have opportunities to explore **relationships** and the **world** around them on a daily basis. Within each monthly theme children are introduced to new concepts regarding people and different environments in which people live around the world. We examine how people live today and in the past, how they work, get along with others, solve problems and how they are shaped by their surroundings. A unique aspect to curriculum is our Children Serving Others (C.S.O.) projects. This program is designed to allow children to learn the importance of reaching out to others in our community and around the world.

Creating and the Arts: Whittier Wildflowers believes art is an expression of one's self and involves both creating and exploring. We provide opportunities daily for children to tap into their creative side. Teachers provide time, materials and space for the children to explore through multiple mediums, such as, visual arts/free art, construction (building blocks and legos), dramatic play, music and movement. During this time of play children are encouraged to create, respond, evaluate and share about the activity or project they created. Children may choose to draw in shaving cream or use watercolors at the easel, whatever they choose is a response to their desire to play and create!

Physical Development:

- **Gross Motor Development:** Whittier Wildflowers believes physical health is an integral part of a child's growth and development. We provide both outdoor and indoor space and equipment that encourages a variety of movement opportunities through fun, creative and challenging activities. Each day the children spend a minimum of 30 minutes outside or in the gym, during which time play equipment such as, trikes, bikes, scooters, balls, hoops, ribbons, balance beams and other toys that encourage physical activity are accessed. While in the primary classroom, children are not seated for more than 30 minutes at a time and we use music as a way to encourage fun, creative exploration and movement between activities. Our school prides itself on the wonderful space we have to encourage movement because we believe children are meant to jump, run, giggle and wiggle. We are excited to teach physical and gross motor development through play-based experiences that demonstrate skills that children will carry throughout their lives.
- **Fine Motor Development:** Whittier Wildflowers believes the development of small muscle control and coordination is critical in the early learning years. We provide many opportunities throughout each day for the children to work on these skills. Fine motor skills are developed through the use of a variety of tools (crayons, paintbrushes, scissors, keyboards, play dough, puzzles and even hand washing) Teachers model the use of tools and toys and encourage children to play and explore the many activities in the classroom.
- **Physical Health:** Whittier Wildflowers believes learning basic physical health skills is an integral part of a child's well-being. Children are taught the importance of staying healthy by washing hands, covering mouth when coughing or sneezing and sharing when not feeling well. Children are also encouraged to show independence with bathroom duties, wiping nose, washing hands, buttoning and zipping clothing and eating a healthy snack.
- **Nutrition:** Whittier Wildflowers believes the preschool years are a critical time in human development and thus an important time to introduce healthy habits around food and nutrition. Therefore, we have adopted the **LANA (Learning About Nutrition through Activities)** curriculum developed through a grant from the National Cancer Institute to the Minnesota Department of Health. This program is designed to help preschool children learn to taste, eat and enjoy more fruits and vegetables. Our teachers will be increasing opportunities for children to taste fruits and vegetables as an enrichment activity, provide hands-on activities encouraging healthy habits, create a supportive environment and model healthy eating.