



TOOLS
OF THE
MIND

P
re-K
Preschool



Welcome Parents, to *Tools of the Mind!*

Your program or school district is investing in children by providing the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum. Your child has a wonderful year ahead!

What makes a Tools classroom unique?

→ Focus on self-regulation

Current research shows that self-regulation (both cognitive and social-emotional) has a stronger association with school readiness than IQ or entry-level reading or math skills. Good self-regulation includes the ability to stay on task, ignore distractions, and hold two strategies in mind at the same time, as well as the development of self-discipline and the motivation to succeed. Aspects of self-regulation such as the ability to pay attention, remember on purpose, plan one's actions, reflect on one's thinking, and cooperate and act empathetically toward peers, heavily influence a child's future success in school. Inadequate self-regulation is associated with discipline problems and poor social adjustment.

Helping young children improve their self-regulation is critical to closing the achievement gap for many at-risk children, as well as helping all children reach their highest potential.

“ A growing body of research indicates that a lack of self-regulation may be the root cause of many children's lack of school readiness. ”

The central focus of Tools of the Mind (Tools) is the development of both cognitive and social-emotional self-regulation at the

same time that academic skills are taught. In a Tools preschool:

- * Practice in self-regulated learning is embedded into all activities.
- * Teachers use strategies to help children improve the quality of their dramatic make-believe play so it fosters self-regulation development.
- * Research-based literacy and math activities are modified to include self-regulatory components.
- * Specific instructional activities are designed to teach self-regulation and reflective thinking.
- * Classroom management techniques maximize time-productive interactions and task involvement.



▲ What is a typical Tools Pre-school day like?

- Children begin the day by solving a 'Mystery' - in the beginning of the year, answering a 'Mystery Question' and by the end of the year, solving mysteries involving numbers, shapes, patterns, letters, letter sounds and rhyme.
- Children gather together for an Opening Group and engage in activities that support their awareness of concepts of print and letter sounds, build positive relationships with peers, develop oral language skills, and mathematics understandings in fun activities like Share the News, Timeline Calendar, Weather Graphing and Message of the Day.
- Throughout the day children engage in Attention Focusing Activities, Community Building Activities and Self-Regulation Activities.
- Every day children engage in make-believe play, choosing one center and planning their play orally, in drawing and using Scaffolded Writing as they are ready.
- Children engage with their teacher in 'Make-Believe Play Practice' building strong make-believe skills, leading to higher-level play and greater self-regulation development.
- Children engage in both small and large group 'Story Labs' building comprehension skills
- Children do 'Buddy Reading' or 'Graphics Practice'
- Children engage in small group and partnered math and science activities
- Children rest, eat snack, play outside, engage in free play--- have fun!

■ Parent Involvement

How can I support self-regulation development at home?

- Support make-believe play at home; make 'props' available and a space for pretend play. Take your child on 'field trips' to local places in the community to 'study' for play!
- Use the Tools approach to 'transitions' -- engage your child in pretending. When it's time to leave the playground, or brush teeth, suggest that your child (and you!). . . 'pretend to be giant elephants, swinging our trunks like this. . . as you move toward the destination!'
- Invite friends over, and support your child's play with other children.
- Give your child a 'tool' to stay regulated during 'wait times' -- learn songs and fingerplays from the classroom and begin singing or saying these whenever your child is waiting.
- Have your child set a timer with you to ring when TV time is over, or it's time to go to bed. When it goes off, it's ____ time (because the timer says so--not you!)
- Play games like 'Simon Says' which require children to 'inhibit' acting - to think and deliberately *not* do something.
- Play simple 'memory' games to build working memory -- put a few favorite toys or food items on the table and ask your child to say the names of each to 'help you remember.' Then cover the toys and take something away or change the order. See if your child can remember and tell you what changed!
- Read storybooks together; read favorites many times. Let your child begin to 'tell' what happens next when you turn the page; soon your child can 'read' the story to you!
- Encourage children to 'talk' when they are engaged in challenging tasks - saying aloud the steps in getting dressed, talking about how to find the next puzzle piece. This kind of self-talk supports concentration, sustained effort and success!

For more information, please visit our website at

www.toolsofthemind.org

National and International Recognition

U N E S C O

In 2001, the International Bureau of Education, an arm of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), named Tools an exemplary innovative educational program.

O t h e r s

Footage showing Tools classroom activities can be seen in the "Pick-up Reading" television case and the "Growing and Learning in Preschool" video produced by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). Scaffolded Writing, a technique invented by Tools its teacher writing, has been named as a model literacy technique by the International Reading Association.

How can I contribute to my child's Tools Preschool experience?

- Contribute theme-based props to the classroom
- Make play dough for the classroom
- Take photos of your family in different 'role' contexts, and people working in roles in the community to support make-believe play
- Look at your child's play plans and talk with your child about them
- Ask your child to 'show you' how to play in the current play theme; what does a 'doctor' say or do? What should I do as the 'patient'?
- Communicate regularly with your child's teacher. Ask questions! Share your observations of play and self-regulation development!
- Know that your child, and your child's teacher are grateful for your participation!