

Program Description-- ERUSD Early Learning Program

ERUSD's Early Learning Program provides high quality early education for all participating children. Our program includes the following key instructional components:

Highly Trained Teachers

Our programs are staffed by highly trained teachers who receive extensive weekly staff development conducted by Early Learning Program Director, Julia Gavilanes. Trainings are customized to address key instructional strategies such as best practices for teachers phonics and writing to young children that will result in optimal teaching and learning in all preschool classrooms. During these frequent trainings, teachers have an opportunity to engage in important professional dialogue and share instructional ideas with one another. The results of these collaborative trainings are reflected in the wonderful teaching and learning that takes place in our ERUSD preschool classrooms.

A Focus on Literacy

Teaching preschool children the alphabet is a huge component of getting them ready to succeed in kindergarten. In ERUSD preschool classrooms, children master the alphabet with the Alphafriends program-- a developmentally appropriate system for teaching letter names and their corresponding sounds.

Each week, preschool teachers introduce their students to a new letter of the alphabet. Every letter is associated with a fun, colorful character and related activities for children to enjoy. Over the course of each week, children sing, dance, read, paint, and write about their new Alphafriend, and by Friday, children are experts on the letter of the week!

As Alphafriends is also used in kindergarten classrooms, it offers an ideal foundation for transitioning to elementary school. By the end of the school year, preschoolers learn all 26 letters of the alphabet and are prepared to enter kindergarten ready to read and achieve!

Math Instruction

In an effort to ensure that all preschool students enter kindergarten prepared for success, the ERUSD Early Learning Program utilizes the High Scope Numbers Plus math curriculum. Acquired with grant assistance from First 5 LA, "Numbers Plus" is a comprehensive, research based mathematics program for preschool students.

Aligned with the standards of the National Council for the Teachers of Mathematics, Numbers Plus provides students with key foundational math skills that they will need for success in elementary school and beyond. With Numbers Plus, teachers use fun, engaging materials to teach children lessons in five content areas: Number Sense and Operations; Geometry; Measurement; Algebra; and Data Analysis.

Each of the program's 120 lessons gives children opportunities to participate in hands-on activities that promote solid concept development and problem solving skills. For example, children play with interesting materials like colorful number cubes to perform basic addition and

manipulate 3D shapes to learn about geometry; these important early experiences will lay the foundation for ERUSD's preschoolers to become the mathematicians of tomorrow!

Arts Education

Utilizing the Art in Action curriculum, preschool students study the lives and masterpieces of several great artists over the course of the school year. To promote oral language development and critical thinking, children participate in "art talks" with their teachers in which they discuss and analyze great works of art from such notable greats as Vincent Van Gogh, Pierre Auguste Renoir, and Wasily Kandinsky.

After learning about the artists and studying their work, children then roll up their sleeves and get to work producing their own masterpieces. Using a variety of materials- such as oil pastels and clay- children produce original work inspired by the style and techniques of the masters they have studied. From three dimensional Native American inspired sculptures, to formal floral still life paintings in the style of Van Gogh, the children's work has been nothing short of phenomenal! As a staff, we are extremely enthusiastic about our fine arts curriculum and are confident that these artistic experiences will help our students develop the oral language and creative skills needed for success in kindergarten!

Technology

The ERUSD Early Learning Program recently implemented a new technology based phonics program to teach children to read and prepare them for success in kindergarten. Each of the 10 preschool classrooms across the District has been equipped with iPad minis to access "Pup's Quest for Phonics," a high-quality, research-based reading app. The Pup's Quest app guides children through a delightful, animated world and uses cutting-edge educational technology including voice recognition and touch screen features to teach children letter names, letter sounds, and strategies for reading simple words. Preschool staff is optimistic that the recent acquisition of iPads and Pup's Quest will align the Early Learning Program with K-12 efforts and ensure that preschool students have access to the most current technological resources to assist their learning.