



Why Choose Capital City for Pre-Kindergarten?



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A Whole Child Approach

At Capital City, the Pre-kindergarten program is designed to be engaging and developmentally appropriate for young children. Learning experiences and the learning environment support children's academic, social/emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development. The role of teachers in Pre-K classrooms includes facilitating children's learning through intentional and thoughtful planning, designing engaging and varied experiences for children that encourage independence and collaboration, and documenting children's thinking and learning. There are three teachers in each Pre-K classroom – a lead teacher, an associate teacher, and an assistant teacher.

We also believe that instruction in arts and fitness is critical to developing the whole child. Arts and fitness are both integrated into our classrooms and curriculum and taught through separate classes, making for a vibrant learning community conducive to children's unique and different approaches to learning.



Multi-Age

Pre-kindergarten classrooms at Capital City are multi-age, with each classroom typically hosting 8 three-year-olds and 11 four-year-olds. We have found that the benefits of a multi-age classroom include: teachers form strong relationships with children and families, as children are in the same classroom for two years; the collaborative nature of the multi-age classroom, where children have a strong voice in making decisions about the classroom with one another and with adults, creates a warm environment in which children feel recognized and important; while there are many opportunities for older children to take an active role in helping younger children transition smoothly into the school year, the relationship between elder and younger children does not flow one way, cross-age relationships are mutually fulfilling.



Play-based, developmentally appropriate program

At Capital City, we recognize that young children draw their knowledge from interacting with and experiencing the world around them. Therefore, children's school days consist of long blocks of time when children are encouraged to explore, ask questions, find answers, discover their own interests, and interact and negotiate with peers and adults. Teachers carefully choose materials within the learning environment to support children's interests, as well as to engage children in varied learning experiences. Though children are often involved in activities of their choosing, there are also times when teachers form specific small groups to support children's literacy and mathematical development or to deepen their understanding of an expedition topic.

The Pre-kindergarten program at Capital City supports children's physical growth and development in a variety of ways. Children engage in outside play for extended periods of time each day, climbing structures, playing group games, balancing on large rocks and logs, or riding tricycles. As a part of the school's Adventure program, Pre-kindergarten children participate in long hikes in Rock Creek Park and a series of swimming lessons at a local pool.

Sample Pre-K Schedule

8:15am - 8:30am
Arrival, Breakfast, & Morning Choice

8:30am - 9:00am
Morning Meeting

9:00am - 9:45am
Outdoor Play

9:45am - 10:30am
Centers / Snack

10:30am - 11:00am
Small Groups

11:00am - 11:30am
Fitness, Library, Music, or Drama

11:30am - 12:00pm
Read Aloud / Journals

12:00pm - 1:00pm
Recess & Lunch

1:00pm - 1:15pm
Transition to Rest

1:15pm - 2:30pm
Rest

2:30pm - 3:15pm
Transition to Wake & Second Step

3:15pm - 3:30pm
Closing Circle & Dismissal

3:30pm - 6:00pm
Aftercare (optional)





Comprehensive Arts and Fitness Program

Though arts (visual, dramatic, musical) and physical movement are integrated in the classroom throughout the school day, children also participate in arts and fitness classes each week. In addition to these whole-class experiences, children visit the Pre-K Art Studio in small groups (4-5 students) each week. The Early Childhood Art Teacher collaborates with teachers to blend classroom projects with teacher and student interests into varied art or project experiences that makes children's thinking and learning processes visible. Materials and experiences introduced in the Studio may include: painting, drawing, clay, printmaking, mixed-media, found objects, paper-mache, textiles and recycled materials.

EL Education

Capital City implements the EL Education model. Through this model, Pre-kindergarten children engage in expeditionary learning with an emergent curriculum approach. This approach focuses on being responsive to our students' interests to create meaningful learning expeditions, which are in-depth explorations of a particular topic. These expeditions encourage children to ask questions and foster deeper learning. Within the context of expeditions, children have the opportunity to engage in fieldwork, community service, or work with experts. Expeditions immerse children in the topic at hand, connecting different curriculum areas through a variety of smaller projects that lead up to a culminating project.

Sample Expeditions with an Emergent Curriculum

After expressing an interest in the physical environment, Pre-K students made school maps and interviewed school leadership to learn more about our building. This led to a focus on the mechanical room, the place they believed to be most important within the school building. They discovered how pipes bring air, water, and electricity to classrooms. Students also showed an interest in puppetry. They visited Glen Echo to see a play and worked with a puppeteer. The study culminated in students writing and performing a puppet show about the mechanical room.

Based off an initial interest in construction vehicles, Pre-K students completed an in-depth study of food trucks! After exploring different kinds of food trucks and menus, students made their very own food truck. Students used recycled materials to create the truck, brainstormed and created a menu with the food items of their choice, and used modeling clay to create the food.





Nurturing and Supportive Before and Aftercare Programs

Capital City Lower School offers all students in Pre-kindergarten before-care and aftercare options. Both programs are consistent with our regular school-day routines and are staffed by teachers who understand the developmental needs of young children. Teachers working with Pre-kindergarten children in aftercare also work with them for most of the school day. While there is an expected routine in both before-care and aftercare, the programs are structured enough for students to feel safe, while offering many choices of activities so that children can have fun! We offer a sliding scale to families who qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Parents as Partners

Parent engagement in the life of the school, and especially in the life of your child at school, is a critical aspect of Capital City's model. We work to form strong, collaborative partnerships with parents even before the first day of school. Pre-kindergarten play groups are held over the summer, so that parents can meet each other, children can meet other Pre-kindergarten children, and teachers and staff can begin to welcome children and families into the school space. In addition to play groups, each Pre-kindergarten child and parent(s) are invited and strongly encouraged to attend an individual meeting with his or her classroom teacher before school begins. During these meetings, parents are encouraged to share their hopes and dreams for their children. Capital City also welcomes parents to join Pre-kindergarten classroom potlucks, attend Wednesday All-School Meeting, and volunteer in the classroom or on fieldwork. Showcases held at the end of expeditions are a wonderful way to connect with your child and better understand what they are learning. We require all families to attend three parent/teacher conferences each year and encourage families to volunteer in support of the school.



Our early childhood program fosters a progressive approach to learning. We recognize that young children draw their knowledge from interacting with and experiencing the world around them. Teachers direct group activities that provide new experiences and introduce curriculum content and conventional academic skills that develop the whole child and lifelong learners.

Ntaka Wellington,
Early Childhood Director

