



What does the Summers-Knoll philosophy look like in preschool?

Through play and exploration, our preschool students find deep understanding in our relationships, our learning, and our environment. Our preschool program was designed through the use of the Summers-Knoll School Mission, Vision, and Values statements as our compass.

Mission

Summers-Knoll School exists to prepare children for the future through a challenging academic program that considers the whole child in a supportive, encouraging, and joyful environment.

At the Summers-Knoll Preschool, we are a Reggio-Emilia inspired classroom. The three core principles of the Reggio-Emilia philosophy are the child, the teacher, and the environment.

Vision

Summers-Knoll School is recognized as Ann Arbor's only progressive preschool through eighth grade independent school program. The school's unique combination of project and place based interdisciplinary curriculum and its focus on the development of key academic and 21st century skills (including creativity, problem solving, effective communication, community membership and initiative taking) makes Summers-Knoll School unique in the region. At Summers-Knoll, we prepare students for success at the next academic level and for life.

As a **progressive preschool**, we recognize that children learn through play. They learn how to socialize through play, understanding and practicing how to communicate with their peers. Play allows children to dig deep into their learning about the world around them.

Project based learning in preschool comes naturally for this age group. Our projects come from a combination of children's interests and curiosities as well as through teacher-led explorations based on the teachers' understanding of that which is fascinating to the children. The teachers' role is to tap into children's ideas and to facilitate invitations for deeper learning through play.

Place based learning, in the preschool classroom, means that we are focused on learning about the world we know and also how we can be a part of that world. We see what role we play in our community and as part of our family. We use our collective knowledge to expand our understanding of the world.

2203 PLATT ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48104
T: 734.971.7991 | F: 734.971.9663 | WWW.SUMMERS-KNOLL.ORG

Summers-Knoll School is a 501(c)(3) organization, EIN 38-3235125



Core Values

High academic standards-work of excellence

Preschool students learn through play and we encourage them to do so. We recognize that all children are curious learners about a wide range of topics and we foster their curiosity in all subjects, such as literature, science, math, and global studies. Teachers guide students through the inquiry process, such as asking students, “How did you figure that out?,” “What do you think will happen next?,” “What are you observing,” in subjects such as science and math. Teachers work with children on pre-reading and pre-writing skills through books and print. Teachers focus on “environmental print,” which involves the study of the text of everyday life (signs and labels) that children observe in the world around them.

Getting out in the world

Preschool students learn about the world around them from a focus on their own identities, including families, interests, and experiences, through to a focus on the world outside of themselves that may not be familiar. Teachers actively build in time to learn, listen, and work to help children understand their surroundings, both locally and on a global level.

Meaningful learning that is full of connections

Preschool students and teachers are always asking and answering the question of, “What can you tell me that will help me understand you?”. Through this approach, students and teachers deepen their connections to one another. Relationships are an essential component of the SK preschool program. Teachers focus on emotional vocabulary through direct instruction and through modeling so that children can use words to help explain what they need, feel, or care about to others. Active listening skills are taught in conjunction with social-emotional learning skills so that children learn how to advocate for themselves and how to support others. Children are taught that they are valuable members of the community. Teachers work to create an environment in which all children feel safe expressing themselves. Teachers emphasize social-emotional learning through mindfulness practice, with a value placed on empathy and expression of emotions. Fostering positive relationships is at the core of all of our work.

Respect, community, and belonging

Preschool teachers help students to create a community of respect and belonging by welcoming new children into the group, teaching children how to invite others to join them in an activity, teaching children how to give others space when they need it, and listening to others’ voices. When conflicts arise, teachers focus on communication skills in order to work toward resolutions. Teachers help students to solve problems through dialogue and encourage children to share how they are feeling and what they need.

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SK preschool is committed to anti-bias, anti-racist teaching practices. In preschool, this means that we work to create a community where differences are respected and embraced and that children are learning how to speak out against bias and unfairness. Anti-bias teaching requires critical thinking and problem solving by both children and adults. In preschool, this is largely reflected in literature, art, and through our conversations. Our goal is to create a climate of positive sense of self where individuals and the whole community can reach their full potential.

Fostering independence

Whether it is zipping up coats or taking good care of toys, our preschool teachers know that children are capable of many independent tasks or expectations, sometimes even more than the children realize. As such, teachers help students to recognize their own independence and also when they need more. In practice, this involves:

1. **Responsibility:** “This is something I can do on my own. It may be hard or it may be easy, but I know I can do it by myself.”
2. **Help:** This is done with someone else, such as a classmate or a teacher. It may be more than one person, but each person has a part to do. Children recognize that the tasks with which they need help at one point will soon be something for which they can take responsibility on their own.
3. **Service:** “I need someone to do this for me,” or someone chooses to do it for another as an act of kindness.

Through this method, students learn to articulate their needs, support others in their growth, and work toward their developing sense of personal and community responsibility.

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