

## The Village School Preschool Curriculum

“A child’s world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement.” *Rachel Carson*

The Village School provides a warm, safe, supportive, nurturing environment for three, four and five year old children to grow and become themselves. Teachers are facilitators, gardeners and role models, providing positive reinforcement, encouragement and feedback for the children. The preschool teachers have over 20 years of experience working joyfully with children.

“Play is the child’s work.” *Maria Montessori*

**PLAY** is the center of the preschool curriculum. Through play, preschool children are learning at an accelerated pace in three central areas: physical, emotional and intellectual.

- Physical development: they are developing large and small motor skills, by climbing trees and monkey bars, by stacking blocks, by sledding and jumping, by painting, by holding crayons and using scissors. In the media table, they learn to pour, measure, and to handle beans, seeds, sand, and water. By watching each other and the adults around them, they imitate and practice new skills. They are learning to inhabit their growing body and use it as an effective instrument.
- Emotional development: Children learn social skills and communication in the constant interaction and negotiation with other children, and from the encouragement and example of the adults around them. Imaginative play, such as dress up and dramatic play, feed the emerging feelings. Learning self-help skills, such as getting dressed by themselves, fosters confidence and independence. Art and music feed the imagination and the emotional life.
- Intellectual development: In play, children count, sort, rehearse stories, learn language, and enact their version of the world around them. At this age, children learn from “hand to head,” so that memory is permanently imprinted with the results of any physical activity. Mental capacity is increased as children explore the world around them, taking in myriads of new impressions.

Teachers are careful not to interrupt the daily period of playtime. It is during this time that children explore the classroom, interact with peers, learn to solve conflicts, communicate with each other, learn to share toys and make friends. Teachers observe, listen, help resolve conflicts, redirect if necessary, and ask open ended questions to ignite the thinking process. The classroom is set up to facilitate imaginative play with a dress up and kitchen play area, media table, block area, play stands with puppets, baby and family play, and a great outdoor play area.

**LITERACY** Young children love to hear a story read aloud. Our book area is a cozy spot for children to settle in with a picture book, with a friend or a teacher.

**Story of the Week** Each week a carefully chosen story is told to the class. In the beginning of the year the stories are simple; for example, *Three Billy Goats Gruff* and *The Three Little Pigs*. By the end of the year, the attention span has stretched to be able to take in stories such as *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Rapunzel*. Each day of the week the story is presented in a different way. On Monday the story is told out loud, on Tuesday the story is told using a flannel board, on Wednesday a puppet show is performed, on Thursday the story is read from a well-illustrated book, and on Friday the children act out the story themselves. The repetition allows the children to internalize the story, follow plot, and master sequencing. The values of our culture are imbibed through story, without the need for explanation. Children love story.

**Book Buddies** Each preschooler is paired with a 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade book buddy. The book buddies visit the preschool each Tuesday morning at 8:45 and look at books with their preschool partners for fifteen minutes. Throughout the year this friendship is fostered in many ways; the buddies sit together at All School Sing each Monday morning, work together on Harvest Day, play together on Field Day, at the Teddy Bear Picnic and in the playground.

**Library** The preschool walks to the Royalston library twice a month to hear a story and check out books. Children's literature is highly regarded by the Village School preschool teachers, and our trips to the library reinforce our love of books and reading.

**Social Curriculum** This is one of the most important reasons for children to attend preschool. Learning to make friends and resolve conflicts are important lifelong skills! Learning to be a member of a community is embedded in the classroom, and is an essential part of preschool life. The children are building social skills with daily interactions with other children and through the modeling and encouragement of teachers.

**Math** learning is integrated in classroom activities, and takes place in cooking, block play, puzzles, geometric shapes, geoboards, sorting games, counting games, measuring at the sand table, and in clay and play dough play. Math conversations take place daily!

**Cooking** takes place at least once a week in the preschool. Children participate in measuring, mashing, mixing, chopping and tasting their freshly prepared snack. Children learn to take turns, practice fine motor skills, and work with the sense of touch and the sense of smell. Children are more likely to try a new food if they have helped prepare it. Many math conversations occur at cooking time.

**Science** Science comes alive for children in daily nature exploration. Many of the classroom weekly themes relate to nature and the seasons, such as trees, leaves, snow, wind, butterflies, oceans, pond life and more. The children work and play in the garden and observe the growing cycles of plants and animals. The class goes on nature walks in the woods surrounding the school. Curious children crowd around the classroom fish tank. Field trips are science and nature based, visiting local farms and ponds. Our class library has great science and nature books at all times.

**Music** Singing feeds the emotional life of children. The children sing daily at circle time, where they also learn to listen, stretch their attention and build memory. Children love to go home and teach songs to their families. The children also use rhythm instruments, songs with movement, and dance to connect their bodies to the basic elements of music. Weekly sessions with our music teacher include listening activities and the introduction and playing of instruments.

**Art** activities are offered every day in the preschool, with emphasis placed on the process. We use open-ended exploration such as finger-painting to allow the child to enjoy the feel of the slippery paint between their fingers, and to make multiple pictures. Individual creativity flourishes in this atmosphere. The easels are open all the time. Children love to mix colors. Watercolors are offered regularly, and are a preschool favorite. Natural materials are set out, such as wool, bark, beans, and seeds. Children are encouraged to draw, cut, paste, collage, and work with clay or play dough.

**Outdoor Play** The children play outdoors every day for an extended time period. Whether rolling in leaves in the fall, sledding in the winter or looking for bugs in the spring, outdoors is where preschoolers love to be! They love to run, get pushed on the swings, dig in the sand, climb the play structure and hang from the monkey bars. Just as they enter into make-believe in the classroom kitchen, they continue to engage in make-believe outside. The preschoolers love playing with their older friends at recess too.

**Classroom Community** Parents and teachers work together as a team. Parents are always welcome in the classroom. Parent/teacher conversations take place frequently at arrival and departure times. Parents are encouraged to share their talents and skills in the classroom. Parents have the opportunity to get to know each other when attending Parent Group meetings and when participating in field trips.

“Children are 100% employed, all the time.” *Raffi*