



Riverside School District 96

# EARLY LEARNERS PRESCHOOL



**Riverside Public Schools District 96**  
3340 S. Harlem Ave. Riverside, IL 60546



Developing individuality,  
creativity, friendships,  
and a sense of self in a safe,  
nurturing environment.



## **Riverside Public Schools District 96**

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**Blythe Park School**  
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**Hollywood School**  
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## **Foreword**

Early childhood is a special period in the lives of young children. It is a time of rapid growth and development, with each individual child developing at his or her own individual pace. The early childhood classroom is where children, ages 3 -5 years, explore the world around them, engage in interactions with other children, and learn through play.

This handbook is a resource for parents. In it is information about the Early Learners Preschool Program, information about the goals children will work towards while in the program, suggestions to help you prepare your child for the school experience, and a summary of school procedures.

We wish to work closely with you to have your child's beginning school years be successful. Feel free to contact our office if there are questions, or if you need assistance in preparing for the start of the coming school year.

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## Welcome to Early Learners,

*where learning is fun and fun is educational!*

### **The Value of Play**

You say that you love your children,  
And are concerned that they learn today,  
As am I, that's why I'm providing  
A variety of kinds of play.

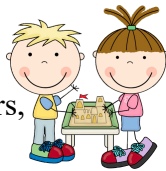


You are asking what's the value  
Of having your children play?  
Your daughter's creating a tower,  
She may be a builder someday.

You're asking me the value  
Of blocks and sand and clay.  
Your children are solving problems,  
They will use that skill every day.

You're saying that you don't want your son  
To play in that sissy way.  
He's learning to cuddle a doll,  
He may be a father someday.

You're questioning the learning centers,  
They just look like useless play.  
Your children are making choices,  
They'll be on their own someday.



You're worried your children aren't learning  
And later they'll have to pay.  
They're learning a pattern for learning,  
For they'll be learners always.

- NAEYC

## Preparing for the New Year

### ***What Parents Can Do:***

Beginning a new school year often means changes and adjustments for both parents and children. In order to have a positive start to the school year, you may want to follow these suggestions to prepare your child for the first day:

- ❖ Show enthusiasm and excitement for the new school year. If you are confident and excited, your child will be, too.
- ❖ Arrange a play-date with another child from your school, so that your child will see a familiar face when he/she arrives on the first day
- ❖ Start daily routines several weeks before school begins. Encourage your child to take responsibility and become involved in packing their bag, setting out clothes, etc.
- ❖ Establish a consistent bedtime that allows for enough sleep
- ❖ Establish consistent mealtimes with a healthy breakfast and well-balanced meals
- ❖ Implement rules at home

To help your child have a successful year, you are encouraged to engage your child in the following meaningful learning experiences both before and during the preschool year:

- ❖ Make time to read with your child each and every day. Provide him/her with a variety of print materials
- ❖ Provide your child with markers, pencils, and crayons and encourage drawing/writing
- ❖ Provide your child with experiences to help develop fine motor skills, such as cutting, sculpting, painting, and putting puzzles together
- ❖ Encourage helpfulness, sharing, cooperation, and respect at home and with other children
- ❖ Visit interesting places, such as the library, grocery store, post office, museums, etc.
- ❖ Provide toys and games at home that encourage hands-on exploration, manipulation, and dramatic play

## **Program Overview**

All early learners come from a unique background with unique strengths and unique learning needs. Our purpose is to provide young children with high-quality, research-based instruction that is developmentally appropriate and tailored to the individual needs of each child. We believe that all children can learn. Therefore, our program provides early learners with hands-on, interactive experiences that make learning meaningful, relevant, and engaging to every child. The Early Learners Preschool Program will provide young children with a strong foundation for future success.



The District 96 Early Learners Preschool program provides a continuum of services to meet the needs of students ages 3-5. Early Learners is available to students residing in Riverside School District and operates 5 days a week for two and a half hours per session. Each session is taught by a teacher who holds Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) certifications in early childhood education as well as special education. Early Learners utilizes an integrated service approach and includes a licensed speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, and a physical therapist working within the classroom environment on a weekly basis. A certified school psychologist also collaborates and consults with the team. In addition to the certified teachers and related service providers, there is a classroom paraprofessional that supports each session. As a team, all staff members strive to engage and challenge each and every child.

## **Continuum of Services**

### **Blended Sessions**

Inclusive sessions are offered for 3-5 year old students with and without disabilities. Approximately two thirds of the students in the blended program are enrolled as tuition-based students and the other third of the students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The blended sessions have a larger class size. Within the blended classrooms, the related service providers will provide enrichment activities for all students as well as meet the specific needs of those with an IEP. All students greatly benefit from the support and developmental expertise provided by the specialists. Children with Individualized Education Plans are eligible to enter the program throughout the year based on the date of their third birthday or date of eligibility determination.

### **Specialized Session**

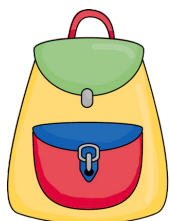
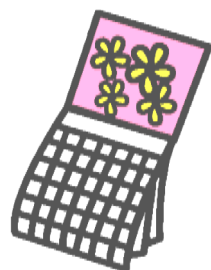
The specialized session is a smaller classroom for students, ages 3-5, with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). All of the students' diverse learning needs are met by having a low student-to-teacher ratio, which provides opportunities for individual and small group attention. The related service providers support the classroom by collaborating with the teacher to provide integrated services within the classroom through both large and small group activities. Children with Individualized Education Plans are eligible to enter the program throughout the year based on the date of their third birthday or date of eligibility determination.

## Schedule

### *Hours for Early Learners sessions:*

AM Session: 8:30 am - 11:00 am

PM Session: 12:15 pm - 2:45 pm



## Supplies

The following items, labeled with your child's name, should be brought on the first day of school:

1. Set of Extra Clothes: These will be kept at school. Please think about all seasons and weather types. (Socks, underwear, shorts/pants, shirt, and any other items your child may need- diapers, wipes).
2. Gym Shoes: These are required for gym time, and will be kept at school in the children's cubbies. We suggest Velcro closures (no slip ons or platforms).
3. Backpack: Please choose a backpack that is large enough to hold folders and art projects.
4. School Supplies: The school supply list is available on the District 96 webpage.

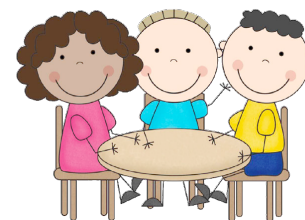
## Daily Routines

### **Circle Time / Large Group**

All the children come together to sing songs, play games, talk about important events in their lives and in the world around them, read stories, listen to others, and explore new ideas, materials, and each other!

### **Group Work / Small Groups**

Children engage in teacher led activities, which may include literacy, science, discovery, math, sensory, creative, speech, fine motor, or movement activities.



### **Outdoor Play / Motor Room**

Children are exposed to equipment that encourages the use of large muscles and helps to develop coordination, balance, and mobility. We will venture outdoors during MOST types of weather.

### **Snack**

Snack is a social time. Children do their own snack routine and sit to talk with others.

### **Learning Centers**

Children make choices from a variety of activities, interacting with both children and adults.

### **Literacy**

Children listen to a variety of stories based on the Unit of Study. Story time encourages children's interest in and respect for books as well as encourages receptive and expressive language development.

## Early Learners Curriculum Overview

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool is the main curriculum of the District 96 Early Learners Preschool Program. The Creative Curriculum believes that young children learn best through active, hands-on exploration and is based on five fundamental principles:

1. Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning.
2. Social-emotional competence is a significant factor in school success.
3. Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning.
4. The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions.
5. Teacher-family partnerships promote development and learning.

Within Early Learners, the development of skills is embedded throughout the school day with a combination of teacher-led and child-centered activities. Play is very important in our program, as it provides an excellent vehicle for learning. During play, children learn to observe, compare, sort, sequence, solve problems, interact with others, recall stories and events, explore mathematical ideas, and construct literacy understandings. Most of all, play is associated with positive social skills and positive approaches to learning in young children. Therefore, Early Learners utilizes learning centers to teach, reinforce, and individualize skills, while students engage with hands-on materials, make their own choices, and explore a rich learning environment through play. During learning centers, students take ownership of their learning. Learning centers include:

- ❖ dramatic play
- ❖ blocks
- ❖ art
- ❖ writing/fine motor



- ❖ toys and games
- ❖ discovery
- ❖ sensory
- ❖ library

The Early Learners Preschool Program focuses on developing skills in 6 areas that all work together to build a strong foundation for future success. The skills in each area include:



### Social-Emotional Development

- ❖ Follow classroom rules, routines, and expectations
- ❖ Learn to respect and care for classroom toys
- ❖ Identify and manage emotions and feelings
- ❖ Take care of his/her own needs appropriately
- ❖ Form relationships with adults
- ❖ Interact with peers
- ❖ Build and maintain friendships
- ❖ Demonstrate cooperation and turn taking
- ❖ Increase self-control
- ❖ Improve problem-solving skills



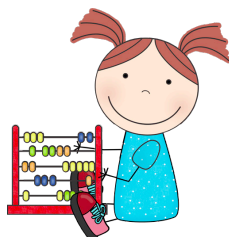
### Literacy

- ❖ Notice and discriminate rhymes
- ❖ Notice and discriminate alliteration
- ❖ Identify and name letters of the alphabet
- ❖ Use letter-sound knowledge
- ❖ Use and appreciate books
- ❖ Recognize and use print concepts: letters vs. words, left to right, top to bottom, etc.
- ❖ Interact during read alouds and book conversations
- ❖ Use emergent reading skills
- ❖ Retell stories
- ❖ Write name
- ❖ Write to convey meaning



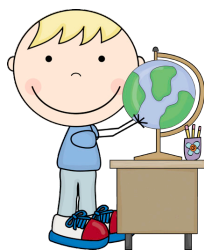
## **Mathematics**

- ❖ Rote count
- ❖ Count objects and quantify objects
- ❖ Connect numerals with their quantities
- ❖ Understand spatial relationships
- ❖ Recognize and identify various shapes
- ❖ Compare and measure
- ❖ Copy, complete, extend, and create patterns



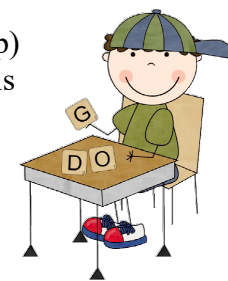
## **Cognitive Development**

- ❖ Attend and engage in a variety of activities
- ❖ Persist at activities for increasing periods of time
- ❖ Engage in problem-solving activities and tasks
- ❖ Explore and investigate how things work
- ❖ Use creativity and imagination during play
- ❖ Recognize and recall people, places, things and tell about them
- ❖ Make connections
- ❖ Use classification skills: sort/group objects by characteristics
- ❖ Use symbols and images to represent something not present
- ❖ Engage in cooperative play with peers
- ❖ Engage in role play



## **Language Development**

- ❖ Follow directions (single & multi-step)
- ❖ Respond to questions of varying levels of difficulty
- ❖ Use language to express thoughts and needs
- ❖ Use words, signs, pictures, voice output devices, and/or gestures to express wants, needs, and interests
- ❖ Increase the length and complexity of sentences
- ❖ Increase vocabulary
- ❖ Retell stories
- ❖ Use language to compare new information with old information
- ❖ Engage in conversations with adults and peers
- ❖ Engage in interactions during play



## **Physical Development (Fine and Gross Motor)**

- ❖ Manipulate various objects using the small muscles in their hands
- ❖ Engage in pre-writing activities
- ❖ Demonstrate age appropriate grasps on writing and drawing tools
- ❖ Demonstrate traveling skills such as walking, running, riding on toys, jumping, galloping
- ❖ Demonstrate balancing skills while jumping, hopping, and walking along various surfaces
- ❖ Demonstrate ball skills such as throwing, catching, kicking



Skills in the areas of Art, Science, Social Studies, and Technology are embedded in the curriculum through various activities.

## **Important Information**

### **Clothing**

Children should come to school appropriately dressed for the weather. All clothing should be washable and suitable for hands-on learning activities. Footwear should be appropriate for all school activities such as running on woodchips, going on walks, climbing, etc. We recommend labeling clothing and footwear with your child's name.

### **Absences**

In the event it is necessary for your child to be absent from school, we ask that you please call to notify the school. Please call near the time that school begins. This practice is followed to help ensure the safety of your child. If you do not call the school, we will call you.

### **Conferences**

There are many ways we can work together for the good of your child. During the school year, we will meet for parent/teacher conferences. These conferences provide an opportunity for working together and sharing ideas for the best interest of your child. More conferences may be planned if parents or teachers desire.

### **Report Cards**

Report Cards will be sent home at the end of each trimester, in November, February, and May. Students are assessed using the Creative Curriculum Gold Objectives for Ages 3-5, which allows students to be assessed while they are engaging in everyday activities.

### **Fall Parent Night**

At the beginning of the school year, each school will host a Fall Parent Night. On this night, you will have the opportunity to meet the teacher and learn important school, classroom, and curriculum information.

### **Getting Involved**

Parents are invited to join the school's Parent Teacher Association/Organization.



## **Suggested Reading List for Parents**

Ages and Stages: Developmental Descriptions and Activities, Birth Through Eight Years by Karen Miller (July 2001)

The Read-Aloud Handbook: Seventh Edition by Jim Trelease (June 25, 2013)

Raising Lifelong Learners: A Parent's Guide by Lucy Calkins (August 21, 1998)

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish (October 5, 1999)

Positive Discipline for Preschoolers, Revised Second Edition: For Their Early Years - Raising Children Who Are Responsible, Respectful, and Resourceful by Jane Nelsen Ed.D., Cheryl Erwin, and Roslyn Ann Duffy (October 7, 1998)

It Takes Two To Talk: A Parent's Guide to Helping Children Communicate by Ayala Manolson (January 1992)

## **Online Resources for Parents**

**Parents.com**

Click on “Toddlers & Preschool” tab and select “Starting School”

**Healthychildren.org**

Click on “Ages & Stages” tab and select “Preschool 3-5 years”

## **Children's Books that Help Make the Big Day a Happy One**

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn (August 15, 2007)

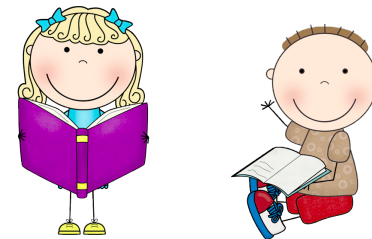
Maisy Goes to Preschool: A Maisy First Experiences Book by Lucy Cousins (June 8, 2010)

The Night Before Preschool by Natasha Wing (May 12, 2011)

What to Expect at Preschool by Heidi Murkoff (July 1, 2003)

I Love You All Day Long by Francesca Rusackas (December 14, 2004)

The Berenstain Bears Go to School by Stan Berenstain (July 12, 1978)



## **Online Learning Activities for Kids**

**Starfall.com**

**PBSkids.org**



## Notes

