



# PYRAMID

supportive early learning center

3048 N MILWAUKEE CHICAGO IL 60618

(312) 458-9865

[www.pyramidprek.com](http://www.pyramidprek.com)

# Pyramid Early Learning Center™

## *The Global Approach*

**PYRAMID Early Learning Center** provides a “whole child” approach designed to provide a positive and integrative experience for children who need support to succeed in a classroom setting.

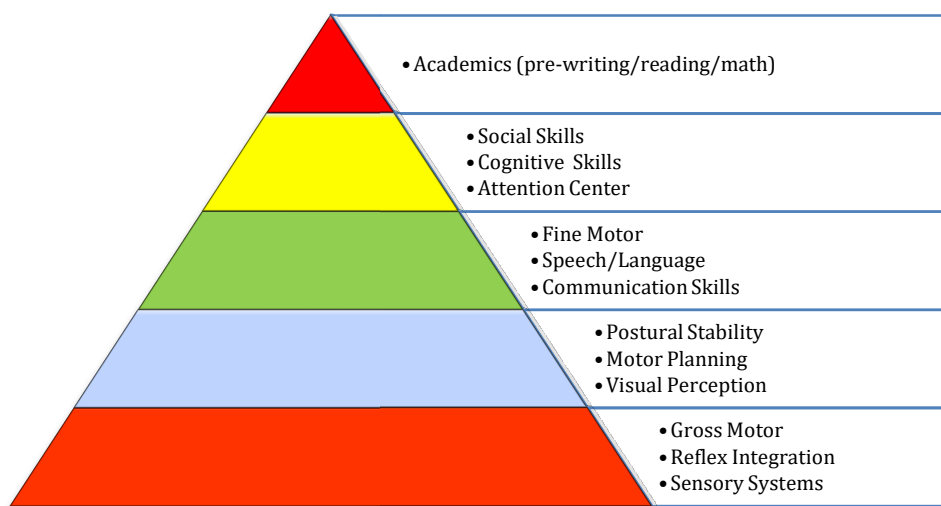
Our philosophy is based on principles of **global development** (best illustrated by Williams + Shellenberger’s *Pyramid of Learning*) in which sensory motor development supports upper tiers of fine motor, cognition, and social-emotional development. Preschool should address the developing physical needs of students before placing demands upon them that exceed their physical capacity to avoid frustration—while yet seeking to stimulate their inherent intellectual curiosity.

Our curriculum recognizes the foundational role of **movement** in development. Our individualized and global approach works with each child’s strengths and challenges to utilize a variety of therapies and approaches best suited to the child’s needs. We focus early and intensively on strengthening the neuromuscular and sensory systems so that children can process information more accurately and interact more successfully.

Structured activities help children learn to self-regulate and move more easily between high-energy and low-energy demands. Unstructured activities provide opportunity to create and learn naturally. Students learn best when **invested** in the learning process—when it’s fun and playful. Once they’ve had a positive experience, they can participate more fully in a classroom setting and thrive.

The components that help create a supportive environment include:

1. Flexible curriculum: provides academic structure and goals for pre-math, pre-science, language, social, and executive functioning skills.
2. Socialization program: emphasizes acceptance, strength, and self-confidence through the formation of strong, reliable relationships and successful social interactions.
3. Multidisciplinary therapy program: supports motor planning, sensory processing, self-regulation, attention/focus, speech, behavior, fine motor skills, and core stability.



### **Global Approach:**

Pyramid Early Learning Center offers a unique approach that blends various therapeutic approaches (e.g., ABA, Floor-time, PLAY Therapy, Multisensory Approach) depending on individual child's personality, strengths, and needs. The focus is on **stability**—motor, speech, social, sensory, and regulatory—to help children transition to and succeed in a classroom setting. We individualize each child's curriculum to allow for both academic and therapeutic services.

We start with a comprehensive evaluation to determine strengths and needs, provide an accurate baseline of developmental skills in all developmental domains (cognitive, speech-language, gross & fine motor, adaptive, social-emotional), and review complete medical history including auditory and vision status.

Specific services will be provided to support each student, based on individual challenges, while utilizing their strengths to foster the foundational skills needed to reach school readiness goals outlined by The State of Illinois. Each student's progress is charted monthly with periodic parent/team meetings and a six-month re-evaluation.

The morning and afternoon sessions are led by a preschool teacher and a licensed speech language pathologist (CCC-SLP/L.) Multidisciplinary therapeutic support is available throughout the day.

### **Flexible Curriculum:**

The students at Pyramid are encouraged to learn through their direct experience in an environment that is safe, stimulating and provides a balance between a flexible and structured routine. The key focus during this part of the curriculum is on teaching them routine and easing them into the idea of learning in a structured environment.

Our academic focus is similar to the Whole Child Initiative. The Whole Child Initiative identifies five kinds of learning:

- cognitive-intellectual activity, associated with the left brain;
- creative-intuitive activity (the arts), associated with the right brain;
- structured physical movement and unstructured, self-directed play;
- handwork, making things that can be useful;
- engagement with nature and community.

Our teacher is trained in traditional, structured curriculums as well as flexible, independent programs such as Montessori. She will use key academic elements of the Creative Curriculum as well as the British Curriculum/Aistear to set learning goals in:



Board-certified behavior analysts and special needs instructors will tailor academic activities for individual students based on need.

Weekly planning will be based on main preschool subjects of:



We will draw on Project Wild's curriculum.\* Project WILD is one of the most widely-used conservation and environmental education programs among educators. It is based on the premise that young people and educators have a vital interest in learning about our natural world. In line with its mission of conserving wildlife through education, our curriculum will incorporate activities for children aged 3-7 that aims to connect young children with nature and the outdoors.

\* Project WILD is a joint project of the Council for Environmental Education (CEE) and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), and is a proud member of the No Child Left Inside Coalition (NCLI).

The center provides extracurricular activities that stimulate physical, creative, and imaginative skills—e.g., theater, dance, music, yoga.

Pyramid Early Learning Center focuses on the concept of learning through play while concentrating on the individual interests of the child and extending their natural play to incorporate learning in a manner which is enjoyable for them.

We aim to:

- Value all children equally and to provide opportunities for equal access to the curriculum;
- Plan our curriculum to meet the needs of individual children;
- Recognize that some children will need additional support to ensure access to the whole curriculum;
- Recognize the importance of early identification and assessment of children with additional needs, and work within the code of practice;
- Work in partnership with parents, valuing their views and knowledge and keeping them fully involved in their child's learning experience;
- Begin to establish confidence and early primary knowledge such as colors, numbers, environmental sound identification, large motor skills related to class songs and music, social peer awareness and parallel play, and expression of self to others;
- Develop fine motor skills as writing becomes a greater academic focus;
- Begin to increase body awareness and body confidence through motor activities that encourage greater coordination, timed and sequential movement to music, and skill exploration in our gym setting;
- Develop students' ability to participate in structured games with rules.

### **Foundational role of movement in development:**

Children need movement to learn—it is vital to a child's cognitive growth. Poor motor skills can cause anxiety, withdrawals, negative behaviors, tuning out, etc. Children need to know with confidence (1) where they are in space and how to move successfully within a dynamic environment such as a classroom and (2) how to put together the correct muscle movements to respond to a physical demand.

Appropriate neuromuscular development supports academics and executive functioning such as decision-making, cooperation, creativity, problem solving, and overall academic achievement. Pyramid's students have access to a well-equipped sensory gym, Interactive Metronome (motor planning modality), and experienced pediatric physical and occupational therapists.

The classroom daily routine provides a consistent framework focusing on a variety of learning experiences including individualized activities, small and large group activities, dramatic play, and self-care and is interwoven with socialization opportunities.

**Students learn best when *invested* in the learning process:**

PYRAMID's play-based activities will incorporate movement, art, and music to motivate and interest students, which will enhance the learning process. Children will be encouraged to transition from physical movement to sitting and listening by using music and sensory cues (visual/auditory/tactile) to support their success. Floor-time strategies will be used to motivate children to engage in reciprocal play. Occupational therapists will be onsite to assist with sensory diet and sensory strategies to help children remain focused and "in the present." We assist struggling students to perform to maximum ability in a classroom setting—to learn classroom routines, follow adult directions, and engage positively with other students. We provide classroom adaptations and curriculum modifications that best fit the child's individual strengths and needs.

**Structure helps children learn to transition and attend:**

Transitioning from one activity to the next is important for children to learn how to self-regulate around changes in their world and keeps them calm and focused. **Consistency** in daily routine supports self-regulation. Support is used in the form of consistent verbal cues, visual cues, visual schedules, and one-on-one support to help lead children into each activity as needed. Feed/sleep routines are also VERY important in keeping a child regulated and alert. Students will have scheduled snack, lunch, sensory breaks, and rest-time (with limited environmental stimuli.) Consultants work with parents, as needed, to ensure an appropriate feed/sleep routine in the home.

**Socialization and Social-Problem Solving**

Socialization is often a significant concern for parents of children who are struggling in classroom settings. Our teachers and therapists provide strategies and support to help students understand social cues/social norms so that they can navigate a full range of social situations and become competent and confident in dynamic social settings. Space and sensory input is adapted to needs—e.g., dyads in smaller classrooms are set up for students who need intensive socialization support or are easily overwhelmed in noisy or crowded environments. Classrooms have a dedicated behavior therapist(s) focused on helping children understand how the social world works.

The lessons are complemented by fun and interesting activities that give your child a chance to learn, practice and integrate new skills. Lesson topics are tailored to the individual or group and may include:

- Being part of a group and recognizing social expectations;
- Managing fast-moving and unpredictable peer movement;
- Adjusting to expected **and** unexpected behavior;
- Using our brains to think about others;
- Thinking with our eyes;
- Being a social detective;
- Reading people's emotions;
- Understanding how our behavior impacts others and their reactions to us;
- Learning how we make and keep friends;
- Tolerating win/lose situations—learning to be a good loser or good winner;
- Comparing body language and social language;
- Comparing literal and figurative language.

### **Multidisciplinary Therapy:**

A licensed Speech Language Pathologist teaches alongside the preschool teacher to facilitate communication skills—receptive speech, expressive speech, pragmatics. Our occupational and physical therapy staff creates activities that strongly reinforce movement and motor planning skills to help children successfully navigate their physical/sensory world. Our teachers are trained to help students succeed with academics and engage in meaningful peer and social interactions.

Students will have access to sensory breaks, music & movement therapy, assisted sensory gym activities, and sensory/regulatory adaptations. Group therapy (speech, occupational, physical) will be provided in each half-day session. In addition, each student has access to pull-out individual speech, physical, and occupational therapy daily, as needed. The lunch hour is supervised and feeding specialists (OT and SLP) are available as needed to assist picky eaters. Intensive feeding therapy will be available upon request.

We embrace a multidisciplinary approach incorporating guidelines and principles adapted from evidence-based programs such as the DIR®/Floor-time Model, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Beckman Oral Motor, Sensory Oral Sequential (SOS) Feeding, Handwriting without Tears, and modalities such as Interactive Metronome and Therapeutic Listening.

Individualized therapeutic programs are provided throughout the preschool day, as well as incorporated into the classroom. Visual and sensory supports are utilized throughout the day with access set up to promote student autonomy.

Clinical counseling, board-certified behavior analysts, licensed social work, and other professionals provide consultative services throughout the academic year.

The school provides access to additional therapy needs such as ABA, intensive socialization dyads, feeding therapy, OT, PT, DT, and SLP services which can be billed to insurance or paid by parent out-of-pocket depending on insurance coverage.

## **Enrollment Policies and Procedures**

The school year runs from September to May for a total of 32 weeks during the academic terms of fall and spring. The core hours are 9:00-11:30 (AM session) and 1:00-3:30 (PM session), Monday through Friday. Extended hours are available for early drop-off (8:00-9:00am) and after-school program (3:30-6:00pm.) Enrollment is on a yearly basis.

Registration is by appointment only and includes an interview with the director as well as a comprehensive global evaluation. Registration forms will be provided at that initial consultation. All forms must be completed in full and on file before any child can attend.

All children are required to have health insurance, a recent physical exam, and up-to-date vision and hearing screenings.

## Schedule

Early Drop off 8:00am—9:00am

- Sensory Diet with PT/OT
- Open Play (supervised by classroom aide)

Morning Academic Session 9:00am—11:30am (w/snack break)

- Classroom Activities (ST/Teacher)
- Individual Therapy (ST/OT/PT/BT/ABA)
- Interactive Metronome
- Therapeutic Listening
- Social Skills groups
- Intensive Socialization Dyads

Lunch 11:30am—12/12:30am

- Picky Eaters Group with SLP/OT
- Open Lunch (supervised by classroom aide)

Rest Time 12/12:30pm—1:00pm

Afternoon Therapeutic Learning Session 1:00pm—3:30pm (w/snack break)

- Classroom Activities (ST/Teacher)
- Individual Therapy (ST/OT/PT/BT/ABA)
- Interactive Metronome
- Therapeutic Listening
- Social Skills groups
- Intensive Socialization Dyads

After School Program 3:30pm—6:00pm\*

- Extracurricular Activities (Art, Music, Gardening, Yoga, Dance, etc.)
- Individual Therapy (ST/OT/PT/BT/ABA)

*\*Children may be picked up between the hours of 3:30-6pm.*

## Tuition and Payments

Tuition payment is due in full prior to the start of class. Failure to make payment may result in temporary suspension from program or expulsion. No refunds can be made due to illness, holidays, inclement weather, or other legitimate conditions beyond the control of the preschool program.

**A \$1,000.00 nonrefundable annual registration fee is required at registration. All fees are to be paid by check or credit card to EBPR/Pyramid.**

Tuition cost is discussed at the initial intake appointment.

## Sick Children

It is common for very young children to have six to ten illnesses a year. We understand how difficult it may be for parents to leave school or work to pick up their child. Parents are encouraged to arrange back-up care for the inevitable days when their child will be too ill to attend the program. If you believe your child is sick and plan to keep them at home, please notify the school by no later than 8:00am. If we believe your child is sick, we will contact you to come to the school and pick up your child immediately.

Please keep your child at home if he/she has:

- Severe cold and fever, sneezing, nose drainage, and coughing.
- Rectal temperature of over 101 degrees in the morning.
- Conjunctivitis: an eye infection commonly referred to as “pink eye.”
- Bronchitis: this can begin with hoarseness, cough, and a slight elevation in temperature.
- Rashes that you cannot identify or that have not been diagnosed by a physician.

- Diarrhea: watery or greenish bowel movements that look different and are much more frequent than normal.
- Vomiting: more than the usual “spitting up.”
- If child becomes really sick without obvious symptoms. In this case, the child may look or act differently than normal. This could be unusual paleness, tiredness, irritability, or lack of interest.
- With a contagious disease, a child must be kept home and the preschool notified. All parents will be notified once a contagious disease is reported. The child may return to school with a note from his/her physician. Illnesses include: chicken pox, strep throat, rosella, measles, mumps, etc.
- If a doctor diagnoses an ear or throat infection, as an example, and the child is prescribed an antibiotic, the child may not be brought to the preschool until he/she has been on the medication for at least 24 hours.

Please call us with the diagnosis. Parents are asked to call the preschool at 773-595-6786 by 8:00am should a child not be able to attend.

### **Absences**

Vacation, holiday, or family time is something that we value as a whole. If you plan to keep your child at home for any reason other than illness, please notify the teachers as soon as possible.

### **Policy on Releasing Children**

Only the authorized parent(s) or other person identified by the parents can pick up a child. A signed form is on file in the child’s folder listing other authorized persons. A photo I.D. will be required upon pick-up from other authorized persons. Under no circumstances can a child be released to anyone not on the signed form.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

Information contained in child’s record and staff files shall be privileged and confidential. The preschool program adheres to a strict privacy policy which protects against the unauthorized removal of records or unauthorized divulgence of parents, staff or program’s confidential information.

Violation of these rules is considered serious and will result in discharge without prior warning. All staff and student observers must comply with these professional ethics at all times and never discuss children, families or staff elsewhere. Observations made in the classroom and all information discussed at staff meetings and at staff trainings are to be kept in strict confidence. Student observers should use a “pseudonym” for children in their observation forms, journal entries, etc. and the word “teacher” to describe any staff.

The Pyramid Early Learning Center does not release information in a child’s record to anyone without parental written consent. The child’s parent or guardian shall, upon request, have access to his or her child’s record.

Media images taken at our school and/or events, if they include children other than your own, should not be posted on any social media networks such as Facebook, etc. Please be considerate of other families when posting pictures and comments on any social site. In order to protect the privacy of Pyramid Early Learning Center’s students, families and staff, parents and staff cannot not



share, distribute, or post images of others via telephone, e-mail, online social networking or other websites without prior consent of the Director.

Violation of the center's confidentiality policy could have serious repercussions.

### **Toilet Training**

The Pyramid Early Learning Center does not provide diapering area facilities for the staff of the children in their care. If any child after admission appears to not be fully toilet trained, the following may apply:

- The director and head teacher will meet with the parents
- A toilet training plan will be mapped out and implemented in the child's home and school routine
- Parents will be responsible for supplying diapers, wipes, and other toiletries

All children are required to have an extra set of clothes at the learning center.

### **Separation Anxiety and Transitioning**

We understand that young children often have difficulty with separation. Our staff is here to support the families in our care and will strive to do everything that we can in order to appropriately comfort your child.

#### ***Tips for Drop-Off:***

- Create a daily routine with your child so that they can expect what will happen before you leave. For instance, make a point to help them take off their jackets, wash their hands, and read a book before leaving.
- Be firm, but friendly about leaving. If your child whines or clings, prolonging your good-bye will only make it harder for you and your child.
- ***Be consistent and ALWAYS say goodbye.***

We are there to help during these hard transition times and help to comfort your child once you leave. Please let us know if we can be of help in any other way.

### **Lunch and Snack Policy**

Parents are required to send healthy lunches and snacks for the morning and afternoon sessions. Peanuts or foods containing peanuts are not approved. Water will be served at both meals. We will have a snack should a child come to school without one. Parents are responsible for informing school staff of allergies or pertinent health information for their child.

Intensive feeding therapy during our lunch hour is available upon request. Please contact the school director to set up.

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