

Outdoor learning is central to curriculum

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Submitted by JCC Chicago

As JCC Chicago Early Childhood reopened its doors in three North Shore locations for the new school year, children entered with smiling eyes over masked faces. With a curriculum based on Reggio Emilia, a nature-based, child-centered approach to learning that relies heavily on the concept of outdoor classrooms, the fresh air energizes students and provides soothing sensory input, which has been especially welcome during this pandemic.

Experiencing nature is critical to stimulating children's imagination and curiosity, so the J has prioritized year-round outdoor learning as a key component of the curriculum for years now, even prior to COVID-19. "Research shows outdoor learning improves self-regulation, advances gross motor skill development, increases concentration, and promotes self-confidence," said Jen Rosenfeld, director of Bernard Weinger JCC Chicago Early Childhood. "Therefore, a love of science and math is developed when students practice counting real objects that they find, such as rocks, acorns, or leaves. Their learning and literacy are strengthened when the same skills, ideas, and concepts are applied in new contexts."

The great outdoors provides safety



and freedom, so teachers engage students by taking long hikes, exploring ponds, and bringing yoga mats out to lawns. Toys, games and instruments are reimagined in our outdoor classrooms. While we must keep our distance, our children can easily build their classroom communities outdoors.

"We can never thank you enough for all that you've done for the school, the program, and our children this year. Our children are so lucky to have been able to maintain their education, social development and, most importantly, fun through this pandemic. Thank you for giving them normalcy and growth," said one Early Childhood parent.

At both sprawling Northbrook

locations, which also includes 'Z' Frank Apachi, and in Glencoe at JCC Chicago at Am Shalom, children experience the outdoors through sketches and words, and educators document their joy in photos. Even deep into winter, kids are enthusiastic about getting outside. Outfitted with new muddy buddy suits and outdoor gear purchased through teacher-awarded grants, children race to pull on their snow-pants and boots, learning valuable self-help skills along the way, and leap into the snow with joy.

Another way the program is unique is the focus on social-emotional needs. Educators work with a full-time social worker to set individual goals so that every child grows at their own pace and the school is committed to learning standards set by the state to achieve age-appropriate milestones.

The curriculum is responsive to students' curiosity and teachers respond to questions with other questions. The goal is not just to feed information, but to be on a path of self-discovery, whether children are 6 weeks or 5 years old. When we watch them, we know it is the children who are also teaching us. Taking in moments of joy, being a good friend and helper to others, and learning with an open heart and mind are values shared across our classroom communities. To schedule a virtual tour, visit jccchicagoearlychildhood.org.

Poko Loko Early Learning Center

A safe, friendly environment for early learning

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Submitted by Poko Loko

Are you looking for a safe and friendly day care to care for and educate your child? Then Poko Loko Early Learning Center is the perfect place for you and your family. No matter what is going on in the world, we are always sure to keep your kids smiling and learning in new and exciting ways!

In order to ensure a safe and clean environment for our staff and children, we have implemented new rules in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All of the children are doing a great job adapting to our new regulations and keeping that positive Poko Loko attitude.

A day in the life at Poko Loko is guaranteed to bring a smile to your child's face. We start the day off with breakfast and circle time to get the children ready and prepared for the day ahead. We then have lots of organized activities for the children as we explore our theme-based curriculum. Whether it be building a tower, playing dress-up, or even dancing with all of their friends, the options are endless!

After reviewing our letters and numbers, it's storytime. Getting hungry? Our chef is preparing a yummy and nutritious meal for lunch. Naptime is next to restore their energy. In the afternoon, there is snack time and the fun continues! We have multiple playgrounds where the kids can ride bikes, go on the jungle gym, and take a ride on the slide.



When it's time to go home, we're sad to see you go, but we're so happy that you had such a great day. Oh, and on your way out, don't forget that daily project that was created specially to be hung up high on your fridge! They look amazing!

Our two schools are located in Morton Grove and Glenview and are open from 6:40 a.m. to 6 p.m. We offer care for infants all the way up to 5 years old. Here at Poko Loko Early Learning Center, our No. 1 responsibility is to keep your child safe and healthy. As a family business, we open our arms and hope that you will join us and be a part of the family as well.

Looking for an excellent, affordable Catholic education?

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Submitted by St. Catherine Laboure

Looking for a premier private education for your child(ren), but at an affordable cost? St. Catherine Labouré Catholic Elementary School has scholarship funds available!

THE BEST KEPT SECRET in Glenview education, SCL is nestled in a quiet residential neighborhood surrounded by lush, green grounds, soccer field, and playground. Academic excellence is the primary focus, with a rigorous Pre-K-8th-grade curriculum. Our school features a wonderful Early Childhood Education Program for 3- and 4-year-olds, with half-day and full-day options, and a full-day academic kindergarten.

Convenient and economical Extended Care is available from 7-8 a.m. and 2:30-6 p.m. Compare the cost of our full-day kindergarten and before/after care to our competition and be surprised.

Students at SCL consistently score in the 95th percentile on standardized testing, making it a great choice among schools in Glenview. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is taught throughout the grade levels, utilizing Project Lead the Way in 6th through 8th grade.

The multicultural, in-person learning community is dynamic and provides students with a chance to build meaningful relationships with people from a wide range of cultures. The devoted staff and great community of parents create a closely-knit, safe environment that embodies a family atmosphere.

All students are given an opportunity to experience success through academics, sports, fine arts, and character building.

With Catholic faith as the cornerstone of St. Catherine Labouré School, students are instilled with Christian values of service to God, others, and the community. The school embraces the Catholic faith with frequent celebration of the Sacraments, a dynamic prayer life, and high expectations for moral behavior.

Come and see the welcoming, caring, and faith-filled community. Our school is located at 3425 Thornwood Ave. in Glenview.

To find out more about this hidden gem, call for a tour at (847) 724-2240. Check us out on Facebook and GreatSchools.com.