

Pleasantdale School District 107

Administrative Office • 7450 S. Wolf Road • Burr Ridge, IL 60527
(708) 784-2013 • Fax: (708) 246-0161 • www.d107.org

Over the course of the 2015-16 school year, an Early Childhood Task Force at the Elementary School has been taking a critical look at our preschool program. This task force is made up of early childhood experts (teachers) and building administration.

Pleasantdale has long been known as a leader in early childhood education, and we recognize the importance of early intervention and education in the development of a child as a learner. Additionally, our philosophy (which is backed by a body of research) is that our youngest students learn best through play. This is why we have held to our principles of a play-based approach to early childhood education. While we have high academic standards for our students, we know that these standards need to be delivered in a manner that is fun for them.

Because early childhood education has been a priority for our schools, we have hired excellent early childhood teachers to implement our program. It was at the suggestion of these teachers that we formed a task force and began to identify ways we can improve our program.

Based on a thorough review of current research and based on current best practices, the Early Childhood Task Force believes some changes in the program will improve our youngest students' experience.

The Task Force believes that preschool students learn best from one another, and therefore we are suggesting a multi-year experience for these students. This means that three-year-olds and four-year-olds will be together in the same classroom. Research shows that this two-year experience...

- better supports social-emotional skills -- studies show that children who are socially competent perform better academically;
- facilitates learning through social interaction;
- exposes younger students to more mature problem solving strategies through their older peers;
- allows older students to learn and/or more thoroughly understand concepts through leading younger students; and
- will facilitate stronger relationships over a two-year period.

Another programming change is the discontinuation of the two-day per week preschool offering. We have found this model to be difficult for young learners on a number of levels:

- students attending school two-days per week often have a hard time remembering concepts, routines, etc. because of the length of time between classes;

Mission

Ensure that each student is a passionate learner empowered with the Academic and social skills to responsibly choose and excel in life pursuits.

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- two-day per week students are grouped with five-day per week students, and it is difficult to adjust instruction to meet all students' needs; and
- students often have trouble transitioning from home to school when only exposed to school twice a week.

This has been a wonderful learning journey for our Early Childhood Task Force as they have looked to make improvements to our program.

Main Takeaways:

- The multi-year preschool approach allows a greater range of opportunities both academically and socially.
- It is possible to have a consistent teacher for consecutive years. This reduces time spent getting to know one another (teacher/student, parent/teacher).
- Eliminating the two-day per week option will benefit students.

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