



Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten: The Foundational Years

Education of the whole child is a prized value at Mounds Park Academy and it is evident beginning with our Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs. MPA firmly believes that it plays a critical role in fostering a sense of competence and confidence in each of its learners by offering an appropriate blend of academic as well as social and emotional experiences. Our goal is to instill in each child the belief that school is a wonderful place to grow and learn!

Both programs provide classroom environments where each child is valued and where warm and healthy relationships are nurtured and supported. The class sizes are small, so each child is offered many opportunities to develop a level of comfort to lead a class discussion, build relationships with peers, and have one-on-one time with the teacher. Teachers make it a priority to get to know each child as an individual so that all students gain the confidence and skills necessary for future success.

MPA believes that once a safe, attractive, and engaging environment is developed, young students learn best when a broad theme is introduced and subsequently broken down into smaller components. The goal is to provide a concrete base from which to structure curriculum but also to allow for flexibility in responding to children's ever changing interests, needs, and life experiences.

Catherine Snow of the International Reading Association says, "The single greatest indicator of future reading success is the size of a child's vocabulary." At MPA, vocabulary is developed on a daily basis by emphasizing careful listening and speaking, singing, writing, drawing, and other forms of communication. This is done in formal ways, such as using small objects to develop fine motor skills for writing, and informal ways, such as using lunchtime conversations for language development.

Children are in an environment that provides rich opportunities to explore and expand their creative and curious minds. The programs address all areas of development in each young learner by using a carefully planned curriculum that presents concept knowledge in an integrated and embedded fashion. To foster the well known connection between sensory stimulation and brain development, children in MPA's Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs regularly engage in hands-on learning activities. MPA teachers have had professional development in differentiated learning to enable them to deliver their lessons in a variety of ways to meet a spectrum of learning styles.

MPA's full day Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs allow ample time for a variety of activities as well as directed play each day. Rather than rushing through activities, young students are given the precious gift of time to pause, linger, and delve into many different areas. In addition to the regularly scheduled school day, there is childcare before school and after school for a minimum fee for those who participate in it.

Both the Pre-Kindergarten and the Kindergarten programs are an integral part of MPA's Lower School, which encompasses students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade Four. The collaborative effort among all the faculty members creates a seamless curriculum throughout all the grades and results in a stress-free transition from one grade to the next for all students.

MPA's Pre-Kindergarten Program

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The program is designed for children who are at least 4 years of age by September 1st of the academic year. It is a full-time program which runs from 8:45 a.m. – 2:45 p.m. Monday through Friday, following MPA's academic calendar. The cost of hot lunch is included in the program and students eat family style in the Pre-Kindergarten room. It is followed by outdoor recess on the playground every day.

The Pre-Kindergarten program is purposefully designed to respect the rhythm of young learners by having a minimum number of transitions with a maximum amount of exposure. The program is carefully planned with alternating active and less active times throughout the day. Students have a daily quiet time every afternoon for approximately 45 minutes when they can nap or quietly look at books and listen to soft music.

Students will participate in music, library, and culture classes with teaching specialists on a regular basis. As a part of the MPA learning community, Pre-Kindergarten children participate in wonderfully guided pairing activities with older students, a long held MPA tradition enjoyed by all students.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

The program develops emerging literacy skills by offering exposure to a wide base of quality children's literature throughout each learning center. It provides many opportunities to build on children's concrete and abstract reasoning skills in developmentally appropriate ways. The program also uses a variety of methods on a daily basis to develop fine motor skills so that when children are developmentally ready to put their thoughts into detailed pictures and words, they have the dexterity to accomplish this without frustration. By the end of the Pre-Kindergarten year, children will have developed a love for learning and a social and emotional readiness for Kindergarten.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Pre-Kindergarten program is located near the south entrance of the school, in the heart of MPA's Lower School. The 1,500 square-foot space was specifically designed for Pre-Kindergarten learners, with one entire wall of windows, a brightly colored floor with a carpeted area for group activities, and cooking facilities for special projects.

Being part of the larger MPA campus community provides numerous opportunities for mini "field trips" throughout the building and grounds. Touring MPA's kitchen and interviewing the cooks is just one example of how students broaden their exposure to new people and places.

In addition to spending regular time in the gymnasium, the children will have opportunities each day to develop their large motor skills by spending time on the playground and other areas of the 32-acre campus.

The classroom is organized into learning centers: art and writing, sensory table, dramatic play, quiet reading, math manipulatives, and symbolic play. Materials in each center rotate based on themes and concepts presented and discussed. The carefully designed learning centers are strategically placed throughout the room to set the stage for children to become inquisitive, life-long learners, as well as to enable them to manage their environment in a stress-free manner.

CURRICULUM

The program focuses on four domains of child development: personal and social, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, and large and fine motor skills. A broad base of quality literature is integrated into all areas of learning with the goal of encouraging children to gravitate toward books in each learning center. They are encouraged to think creatively about stories and are given many opportunities to relive and retell their stories so they associate reading and books with positive learning experiences. Rather than rote

memorization of letters and numbers, students are given the tools to understand abstract symbols through directed play.

There is an emphasis on celebrating diversity with a multilingual program where the children will hear and speak Spanish, French and Hmong every day as well as have Chinese language and culture class with MPA's Chinese teacher once a week. The curriculum is ABC – anti-bias curriculum – where careful attention is paid to making sure that the materials in the classroom reflect a wide variety of cultures and abilities.

FACULTY AND STUDENTS

The program has a maximum of 9:1 student/teacher ratio with no more than 18 students. In addition, a number of students from area colleges have fulfilled their student teaching requirement in MPA's Pre-Kindergarten.

TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

A thoughtful approach is taken to ensure that students transition from one grade to the next throughout all grades at MPA.

The Pre-Kindergarten program anticipates what may be anxiety provoking for its young learners and takes time to incorporate lessons about such changes. For example, in the spring Pre-Kindergarten students will discuss the transition from eating lunch in their room to joining the rest of Lower School in the cafeteria. These discussions culminate with a number of opportunities for students to practice going through the lunch line and enjoying lunch in the cafeteria. The Pre-Kindergarten students also visit the Kindergarten rooms as well as the world language, drama and art rooms. In addition, MPA families of Pre-Kindergarten students have first priority in selecting a daily world language (French or Spanish) for the Kindergarten year.

Sample Pre-Kindergarten Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:45 - 9:30 am	Morning Gathering/ Snack	Morning Gathering/ Snack	Morning Gathering/ Snack	Morning Gathering/ Snack	Morning Gathering/ Snack
9:30 - 10 am	Music	Group Time	Music	Group Time	Music
10 - 10:30 am	Library	Directed Choice Play	Directed Choice Play	Directed Choice Play	Directed Choice Play
10:30 - 11am	Large Motor	Large Motor	Large Motor	Large Motor	Large Motor
11 - 11:30 am	Small Group/ Free Choice	Small Group/ Free Choice	Small Group/ Free Choice	Small Group/ Free Choice	Small Group/ Free Choice
11:30 am – 12 noon	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12 - 12:30 pm	Outdoor Recess	Outdoor Recess	Outdoor Recess	Outdoor Recess	Outdoor Recess
12:30 - 1:15 pm	Book Time	Book Time	Book Time	Book Time	Book Time
1:15 - 2 pm	Nap or Quiet Time	Nap or Quiet Time	Nap or Quiet Time	Nap or Quiet Time	Nap or Quiet Time
2 - 2:45 pm	Journals	Journals	Journals	Journals	Journals

French, Spanish and Hmong languages are introduced daily in the Pre-Kindergarten curriculum. The classes in bold are taught by specialists.

MPA's Kindergarten Program

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The program is designed for children who are at least 5 years of age by September 1st of the academic year. It is a full-time program which runs from 8:30 a.m. – 3:10 p.m. Monday through Friday, following MPA's academic calendar. The full day Kindergarten program allows for exposure to a wide spectrum of subjects. Children also gain social skills and self confidence as they are given time for free choice and directed play on a daily basis.

The Kindergarten program is a multi-transitional program with homeroom teachers who teach the core academic subjects. In addition, specialists teach specific classes throughout the day, including:

- Physical education class every other day
- Spanish or French class every other day
- Music class every other day
- Art class every other day
- Computer class at least once a week
- Library class once a week

Kindergarten children join students in grades 1 - 4 in the cafeteria for lunch and then on the playground for recess each day. Students in the Kindergarten program do not have a nap time.

As a part of the MPA learning community, Kindergarten students participate in wonderfully guided pairing activities with older children, a long held MPA tradition enjoyed by all students.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

The program continues to develop emerging literacy skills by using quality children's literature. Children work on word recognition, analysis and fluency, vocabulary expansion, and comprehension. Those already beginning to read when they enter Kindergarten are challenged to become fluent readers.

The program continues to develop problem solving and higher order thinking skills through open-ended questions and projects in science, social studies and math. Children in Kindergarten will have daily free choice and directed play to help develop their social, emotional and decision-making skills. By the end of the Kindergarten year, children will have developed independence, confidence, and academic skills to be ready to meet the expectations of MPA's first grade curriculum.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Kindergarten classrooms are located near the south entrance of the school, next door to MPA's Lower School Office. There are two sections of Kindergarten with one teacher for each classroom.

The Kindergarten students have a coat room with hooks and cubbies that separates the two Kindergarten classrooms. This space also has an exit that leads directly to the playground. The rooms are filled with student work, printed words, and other stimuli to challenge a spectrum of learners.

In each Kindergarten room there is a large rug area for group time where children have the opportunity to develop speaking and listening skills on a daily basis. There are countless toys, games and manipulatives for children to experience and enjoy.

CURRICULUM

MPA believes that Kindergarten students continue to be more independent with their work and are presented with projects and activities that require problem solving and open-ended experimentation. MPA Kindergarten students learn best by using all their senses and actively engaging in projects that require creative thinking as they develop their abstract and symbolic thinking skills.

The program prepares children to be global thinkers by not only requiring Spanish or French, but also by incorporating lessons involving geography and the study of cultures from around the world. Kindergarten children develop self-confidence by having many opportunities to show leadership, whether it's by leading the rest of the class in discussion or by working in groups with their peers to solve problems.

FACULTY AND STUDENTS

The program has a maximum of 18:1 student/teacher ratio in each of the two sections.

Sample Kindergarten Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30 - 10 am	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
10 - 10:30 am	Computer		Computer		Library
10:30 - 11 am	World Language		World Language		World Language
11am - 12 noon	Homeroom		Homeroom		Homeroom
12 - 12:30 pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:30 - 1 pm	Outdoor Recess	Outdoor Recess	Outdoor Recess	Outdoor Recess	Outdoor Recess
1:15 - 1:55 pm	Art	Music	Art	Music	Art
2 - 2:30 pm	Physical Education	Homeroom	Physical Education	Homeroom	Physical Education
2:30 - 3:10 pm	Homeroom		Homeroom		Homeroom

Homeroom consists of four main subject areas: language arts, math, social studies, and science. These disciplines are taught by the homeroom teachers. The classes in bold are taught by specialists.

What's next?

Now that you've been introduced to the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs at Mounds Park Academy, we invite you to take the next step. There are numerous ways to get to know us even better. But nothing compares to coming on campus and seeing for yourself. We would love to show you our wonderful campus and introduce you to our delightful program.

Call the Office of Admission at 651-748-5577 to schedule an individual meeting and tour of the campus, and visit us online at moundsparkacademy.org

We hope to see you soon!

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