

GOAL OF THE GODDARD SCHOOL IS TO MAKE LEARNING FUN

BY MARK RAEBER - PROGRESS STAFF WRITER



While at Goddard, children are learning as they are playing.
- PROGRESS/Mark Raeber

Throughout this summer the children at The Goddard School® in Shiloh will be traveling the USA.

While they won't be leaving their 1160 Fortune Blvd. campus, they will be exploring a dozen selected states in their classroom activities, said Nancy Thole, program director at the for-profit early childhood education center.

"We selected 12 states and each week we are focusing on a different one," she explained. "And each class is doing something in their activities and lessons that is related to the state we are studying. 628goddard

"This week it is New York so we had the children measure things with apples for the Big Apple and we are studying words related to the big city, such skyscraper," she noted.

Unfortunately, a tee-ball game pitting the Mets against the Yankees was rained out.

Thole, who has worked at the school since it opened in November of 2006, said the USA-themed curriculum is an example of the creative, fun environment Goddard provides for its students.

She then said making learning fun is at the core of the school's education program.

"The biggest thing is the children are learning as they are playing," she said while explaining the play-based curriculum provides an optimal environment for children to develop.

Thole said Goddard's FLEX™ Learning Program is designed to enrich emotional, social, intellectual and physical development while providing the foundation for a love of lifelong learning.

"It helps your child develop learning skills at a pace that supports his or her individual potential," she explained.

To begin, teachers observe and assess each child's developmental achievements and then plan learning activities to build upon what the child can do.

"We try to individualize the program for each child so they can excel at their own pace," she said. "And we work with the children on an individual basis in small group activities as opposed to large classroom settings.

"We especially work on the skills the children will need in prekindergarten and kindergarten, such as learning to handle pens for writing and to hold scissors," she noted.

But Thole added the youngest learners are not overlooked.

Explaining the program for babies, she said, “We start with little things like helping them recognize facial expressions and to recognize voices by reading stories to them. When they get a little bit bigger we give them tummy time to help build the muscles they need for crawling and walking.”

Thole said each Goddard School also has access to additional resources from the parent company, which is based in King of Prussia, Penn.

“We have Spanish. We just got Chinese. We have a math program and a scholastic reading program designed to help build language skills. We also have yoga and we have a manners program, as well. And we incorporate these as much as possible into the classes,” she said.

Goddard’s nearly 130 students come from across the metro-east but a large number are military dependents thanks to the nearness of Scott Air Force Base.

Thole said classroom size varies by age. Babies are cared for in rooms of eight. Children prekindergarten age and above may be in rooms with as many as 20 students. Each classroom has a lead teacher with an aide.

“A Goddard requirement for all lead teachers is that they have a degree,” Thole noted while pointing out the staff of 25 now includes its first male teacher.

While Goddard offers its program year-round, Thole said the summer session is a little different.

“We try to make it a little more fun and we bring more special visitors in,” she explained. “This week we had the Magic House come by and the American Red Cross will be here to do some water safety activities with the big kids.”

She then noted classes do not take field trips away from the school

Goddard has a certified food handler on staff who prepares a morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack in an on site kitchen. Thole noted the school is “sensitive to allergy issues.”

“We have a handful of children with severe allergies and a couple who are sensitive so we work with the families to supplement the food we offer,” she said.

The Goddard School offers either a half or full-day program for children ages six weeks to 6 years that is focused on building a strong and balanced foundation of emotional, social, cognitive and physical skills for each child, Thole said.

The school is open weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and children may attend as few as two or as many as five days a week. For more information, contact Thole at The Goddard School by calling 624-2750.