

THE CARE OF THE WHOLE CHILD

The school operates under an integrated school wide curriculum, in which the many elements of the Palma Ceia experience are brought together in a unified whole. Concurrently, our school experiences some of the same academics, music and movement, fine art, worship, Godly Play stories, performances, literacy and cultural understandings. These themes unite the preschool community. The interests of the children and the cultures of our families flow into the curricular stream.

The social and emotional life of children is to be respected and nurtured. Children are respected as they grow in awareness and gain increasing control over themselves.

REGGIO EMILIA INSPIRED PHILOSOPHY

Palma Ceia Presbyterian Preschool is a Reggio Emilia inspired school. We seek to model in our own cultural milieu the unique global contribution of the schools of Reggio Emilia Italy. What is the Reggio Emilia philosophy? Post World War II families and the community of Reggio Emilia, Italy emerged from destruction to reimagine a healthy community rooted in education. They imagined a school grounded in community support which challenged existing ideas of education and which especially supported critical thinking.

Some of the elements of the model which we incorporate are the following fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia way:

The Competence of the Child - At Palma Ceia we assume competence as the children are active participants in their classroom and learning. Their creativity, confidence, intelligence and energy are celebrated, supported and scaffolded.

The Environment as the Third Teacher - Classrooms, the atelier (our art studio), and the outside areas are designed to invite play and exploration. We have designed beautiful learning environments marked by the distinctive use of light, intentional and homelike furnishings, materials displayed for child usage, natural and organic toys, loose parts, light tables and art materials of all kinds. Children are encouraged to move throughout the space, exploring and constructing.

The Hundred Languages of Children - One of the formative documents of the Reggio movement is the poem, The Hundred Languages of Children, by Loris Malaguzzi. Simply, the poem makes a case for understanding the many modalities of children's learning and expression. Words provide an essential way to understand the world, but expression takes many modes. The central role of art at PCPC is not to "make or reproduce" a model, but as one of the "hundred languages."

The Role of the Teacher - A teacher listens, observes, documents and supports children's learning. Teachers take on the disposition of researchers and co-learners with children. Teachers scaffold

children's knowledge by noting their current level of knowledge and helping them to reach the next level by facilitating new skills, adding resources which they can utilize, facilitating social learning, and arranging new challenges. Teachers plan "invitations" and "provocations" using their expertise. They plan and invite children into explorations of different concepts and ideas. Thus, the teacher bridges the child's current understanding and available knowledge and skills with new learning.

Documentation - Teachers seek to "make learning visible" by documenting and displaying all phases of children's learning. Documentation serves as a way for families to be involved in children's learning, as well as allowing teachers and children to reflect and build on learning and growth. It shows respect for children's learning. Documentation is a research model which serves to provide a fuller and more complete picture of learning, unlike a test.

Family Involvement - Family involvement is critical to the successful support of children in school. Families are experts in their own areas, and a school's hospitality to them expands the possibilities for learning. They are their children's first and lifelong teachers.

Emergent Curriculum - Emergent curriculum stems from the observed interests and curiosities of the children as well as from the ideas of the teachers in their day to day experiences with the children. Children's learning is most vigorous when it is play based and of interest to them and when their teacher infuses academic content into the projects and explorations of the children. Projects can be in-depth study of concepts and ideas generated from the children's interests and can last as short as a few days or up to an entire year.

Real Life Experiences - To the extent possible, real life experiences and materials are provided for children, utilizing all of the senses. The development of the whole child is emphasized.

THE PALMA CEIA WAY

In addition to the Reggio Emilia inspired-approach, PCPC Preschool utilizes a rich collection of resources in classrooms which results in the depth of learning that is the Palma Ceia Way. In all that we do, we have identified academic, social, emotional, and spiritual goals for the children. Lesson plans are prepared with all these goals in mind, and are individualized for the level of each child. Children who have higher ability levels in some areas are encouraged to move ahead. Florida Early Learning Standards are embedded in teaching strategies, which include play, discovery learning, and direct instruction. Teachers are aware of what young children should know at each stage, and create lessons which will encourage children to reach the next level. PCPC Preschool utilizes a web-based curriculum and assessment called Creative Curriculum and Creative Curriculum Gold, an authentic approach to child assessment based entirely on observation of children in their natural environment. It is grounded in 38 research based objectives and is aligned with common core standards and Florida State early learning standards, in order to assess and report on children's progress.

Academics are important at preschool. We believe in preparing our children for more formal schooling. We are knowledgeable about developmental norms and educational standards. Using professionally agreed on standards and a robust assessment, children are prepared for their next school placement, while at the same time, childhood is protected.

PCPC Preschool is an arts suffused preschool. We are blessed to have the Joseph P. McKell Arts Endowment, which provides a robust environment of music, movement, yoga, performance and visual arts. We have a teacher dedicated to the coordination of the arts offerings here. We have an atelier, or art studio, which is a space that allows for ongoing projects and experimentation with paint, clay, found materials, and loose parts. Movement, music, dance and yoga are incorporated in our classrooms and in our outdoor play.

We utilize a developmentally appropriate handwriting curriculum, Handwriting Without Tears, developed by Occupational Therapists. You can learn more about it by [clicking here](#).

The preschool is a worshipping community. Every Monday at 9:30, we are led in worship by Reverend Dr. John T. DeBevoise, Reverend Meghann Pabst or their designate. Gathered in our lovely sanctuary, we worship with prayer, hymns, and a sacred story. The service is under fifteen minutes and appropriate for God's youngest children.

Children of other faiths are welcomed and supported and demonstrations of the elements or stories of their faith are welcomed.

Our spiritual development curriculum is called Godly Play. The Godly Play approach teaches classical Christian language in a way that enhances the child's authentic experience of God. You can learn more about Godly Play by [clicking here](#).

We are a Positive Behavior Support school. Through our partnership with the University of South Florida, we utilize the Pyramid Model, school wide rules, and a teaching, rather than punishing, disciplinary model.

Best practices in academics at the preschool level include contextualized learning, and not over-reliance on worksheets. So, with the Academy of American Pediatrics, we affirm the value of play in the lives of children. Through play based activities, our children develop knowledge and skills that will help them succeed in academic life. Through deep and loving relationships with their teachers, in the shadow of the steeple, they take first steps toward independence. With respect for their unique family cultures, they take their places in a group for the first time. Within this group, they participate with the adults in building a beloved community filled with music, art, play, and friends, and build lifetime memories.

COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

Nancy Little, Preschool Director, and Dr. Lise Fox, Dean of the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences at USF, along with Rochelle Lentini, M.A. Early Childhood Special Education maintain a professional and collaborative relationship, stemming from their work with “First Steps Together.”

We collaborate with USF in the areas of social emotional competency, behavioral support and inclusion. Our school wide rules for positive behavior support are one example of our work together. Our staff contributes board service, we have published and presented with our friends at USF and USF students have written two master’s theses and one doctoral dissertation here. Curricular materials, including training modules showcasing our staff’s interaction with children, are in use in over 50,000 schools. As a result of this collaboration, our director received the Community Partner award from the DeLaParte institute at USF.

With the University of Tampa, we maintain ties that include the practicum hosting and employment of their students, and the involvement of faculty members in ongoing relationship.

Young children are most importantly a part of families who are a contributing part of our community. Almost all families volunteer gifts and talents in some way, enriching every aspect of our school. Some of the ways families contribute are by writing, staff nurture, photography, foreign language, medical support, cultural sharing, building maintenance, governance, financial contributions, and prayer. The Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church welcomes you to participate in the building of our community.