



Pre-Kindergarten Philosophy 23-24

The philosophy underlying Tools of the Mind is intended to support the development of both cognitive and social-emotional self-regulation/executive functions, which research has linked to both short- and long-term results across a variety of different areas of child development and learning. The development of students' basic learning abilities, or mental "tools," both cognitive and affective, is the focus of Tools' extensive curriculum and teacher training program for our Pre-K classrooms in Rumson. The Tools curriculum is a comprehensive, research-based approach to child development that includes the growth of play and social-emotional skills in addition to underlying cognitive and academic abilities.

In our Tools Pre-K classrooms, children engage daily in a variety of literacy, math, and science activities, such as Scaffolded Writing and Buddy Reading, that are specifically designed to support self-regulation and executive functioning while at the same time building academic skills. Rumson's Pre-K teachers are trained to provide children with individualized scaffolding geared to their level of development. Research has shown that students participating in the Tools program outperformed their peers on the measures of executive functions, reasoning ability, and attention, and demonstrated larger gains in reading, vocabulary, and mathematics. Please see the district's [Tools of the Mind-Pre-Kindergarten Philosophy](#) for specific objectives related to literacy, math and social-emotional learning.

Executive functioning is a vital skill to instruct in the preschool years, including learning organizational skills, staying focused on tasks, and concepts of self regulation. Young learners need to practice organizational and self-regulating skills before they can engage in the ability to problem solve and control their responses. Executive functioning and self-regulation develops rapidly in the preschool years and the use of skilled instruction and support in this setting promotes the ability to generalize success into their future academic learning. Important components within Rumson's preschool classrooms include the promoting the ability to sustain attention for age appropriate periods of time and development of task perseverance, the ability to identify solutions to simple problems, the ability to label feelings and build perspective taking, and the ability to practice their patience and take turns.

In Rumson's Pre-K classrooms, our teachers support children's engagement in mature make-believe play in theme-based centers that change over the course of a year. Specific instructional strategies, such as Play Planning, are utilized to support skill development in executive function, literacy, and SEL. During Play Planning, Pre-K students plan the first few minutes of their play by saying, drawing, or writing what they are going to do, which helps children self-regulate and act with intention. Within the Rumson's Pre-K curriculum, we utilize instructional strategies related to the Zones of Regulation curriculum and the Metacognitive Child to promote social emotional learning and problem solving skills, which are then embedded into daily instructional strategies like Play Planning. Weekly small group instruction of the Zones of Regulation curriculum provides a baseline for students' engagement in understanding emotions and the tools they can use in preschool to help them cope and regulate their feelings. In addition, the skills of metacognition are embedded into their daily routines to help pre school learners explore brainstorming ideas, making plans, and reflection on their choices. The use of the Zones of Regulation and

metacognition are exceptionally important in building social emotional development and providing our Pre-K students with the ability to be good problem solvers and engaged, regulated learners.

As they grow, our students dramatize stories, and their Play Plans transform into Learning Plans that assist students in establishing goals for their daily and weekly activities. Students engage in "playful, purposeful learning" based on these objectives, which frequently entails playing learning games with a partner or a small group of peers that get progressively harder. By working in pairs and comparing each other's work products to the set of learning objectives each of the "Study Buddies" had set for themselves, children are taught to keep an eye on and evaluate their work.

Rumson School District Pre-K curricula are aligned with Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, Preschool Curriculum Implementation Guidelines, Guidelines for Preschool Classroom Teaching and Preschool Learning, and Preschool Expectations of NJ: quality standards. Our curriculum is also aligned with the major assessment instruments used in preschool including Early Screening Inventory - Revised (ESI-R) and Teaching Strategies - GOLD.