

The Egenolf Early Childhood Center offers comprehensive approach to learning

To a young child, the world is a wonderful place that offers a lot to learn. Numbers, letters, shapes and colors are just the beginning. According to Dr. Lorraine Cooke, executive director of the Egenolf Early Childhood Center (ECC), getting a child off to a good start in life also requires a comprehensive education that includes health, nutrition and language as well as social and emotional development.

Since 1890, the Egenolf Early Childhood Center has offered the children of Elizabeth a safe and supporting environment in which to learn. Egenolf ECC is staffed by teachers who are college-degreed with special certification in preschool education and teachers assistants who are credentialed in child development.

"Our structure makes it easy for families to feel confident that their child is safe and to trust our certified, expert staff to center on the needs of young children," Dr. Cooke said. "Our superb staff delivers the highest-quality preschool program, which has



Children from the Egenolf Early Childhood Center in Elizabeth enjoy a field trip to the Essex County Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange.

Photos courtesy of the Egenolf Early Childhood Center

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Lorraine Cooke, executive director,
Egenolf Early Childhood Center, Elizabeth

received accolades from legislators, federal administration personnel, advocacy associations and national early education institutes."

The quality of the programs at Egenolf ECC is demonstrated by its national accreditation, which is a rigorous process that takes about a year to complete.

"The National Association for the Education of Young Children, a prestigious national professional association for early education, assesses the program for compliance in more than 400 criteria of high-quality early childhood education programming," explained Dr. Cooke. "Only a small percentage of child care programs and even fewer public school preschool programs are accredited due to the rigor of the process."

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Egenolf ECC is a language-based curriculum. Dr. Cooke believes that a strong foundation in language proficiency acts as a springboard to learning.

"The children are encouraged to use language all through the day, starting with a classroom morning meeting run by the teacher followed by small group activities and individualized work time," she explained. "Then children move into various learning centers where classroom staff promote social skills and language development. Having a strong vocabulary and speaking in sentences ... is the foundation for future success in school and in life."

Dr. Cooke suggests that children with weak language skills will be challenged in communicating. She recommends that parents constantly talk to their children, read to them, ask questions and encourage children to "use their words." Parents also can help by establishing a predictable daily rou-



Children from the Egenolf Early Childhood Center learn about the sense of taste during a classroom activity.

tine, encouraging self-reliance and reducing the time children spend in front of television, phone and computer screens.

The Egenolf ECC offers three programs. The state-funded preschool is open to the children of Elizabeth residents. Families enroll through their school. However, they must write in Egenolf ECC on the enrollment form, since the school is not listed there. Egenolf ECC also provides wrap-around child care that includes a Before Care program that runs between 7:30 and 8:15 a.m. and an After Care session from 3:15 to 5:15 p.m. These child-care programs are fee-based and subsidies are available to eligible families.

The Egenolf ECC summer camp program affords learning opportunities to children ages 3 to 5 throughout July and August. Campers enjoy water sports and other outdoor activities while also benefiting from the High Scope curriculum. Summer camp serves breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. This fee-based camp is open to children regardless of residency.

With an accredited curriculum, a highly quality staff and a special events program that includes both fall and winter festivals, a field day and a class trip to the Essex County Turtle Back Zoo, The Egenolf ECC continues its 133-year tradition of excellence in education.

Egenolf ECC is located at 725 Newark Ave. in Elizabeth. For more information, call 908-352-7508 or visit egenolfecc.org.

— Stan Lemond