

Egenolf Early Childhood Center offers high-quality, accredited preschool learning experiences

The importance of early childhood education cannot be understated. A quality preschool program benefits a child socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively. It helps prepare them for elementary school and builds a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Preschool enrollment typically follows the traditional academic year, making winter and early spring the perfect time to register children for fall programs. But many families are unsure where to begin, and are concerned about the impact of tuition on household finances. The good news for Garden State residents is that free preschool may be available depending on the town in which someone lives.

"In the late 1990s, the Superior Court in New Jersey ruled that certain districts were mandated to provide free preschool to 3- and 4-year-old children residing within those districts in order to ensure a thorough and efficient education," said Dr. Lorraine Cooke, executive director of Egenolf Early Childhood Center in Elizabeth.

In Union County, Elizabeth and Plainfield were among the first districts required to provide free preschool. In the years that followed, New Jersey extended the availability of free preschool to more districts, underscoring the importance of preschool programs while recognizing the burden of childcare costs to working families.

Egenolf Early Childhood Center in Elizabeth began collaborating with the Elizabeth Public Schools in 1999. This landmark institution has been providing high quality childcare and preschool programs to generations of Elizabeth families since 1890.

A child's brain develops connections faster in the first five years than at any other time in their lives, Dr. Cooke said. Access to quality early learning experiences can positively shape and impact a child's early brain development and lead to long-term success.

"Based on years of research, it is clear that attending a high-quality preschool — beginning at age 3 — is critical to supporting young children's success, not only in school, but in life," she said. "Long-term studies find



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that children who participate in quality preschool programs are less likely to be retained, have a higher high school graduation rate, go to college, and have higher earnings than those that did not attend a high-quality preschool."

A Comprehensive Approach

Egenolf Early Childhood Center's staff is committed to providing every child with the best educational experience possible. For many families, selecting a preschool program can be an agonizing decision. Egenolf Early Childhood Center's holistic and child-centered approach encompasses all the attributes that parents should look for when choosing a preschool program.

These include:

- A child-focused environment located in a facility exclusively dedicated to educating young children.
- A research-based curriculum that focuses on the development of the whole child.
- Well-trained teachers with bachelor's or master's degrees in early childhood education or preschool through third-grade certification — or both. Each classroom should have a teacher's assistant that holds a child development associate credential.

- Class sizes are limited to 20 or less children.
- Limited transitions so children remain in their preschool for at least two years.
- Parents are always welcome and can participate in classroom activities.

"Egenolf Early Childhood Center programs support socialization and self-control, and help children gain independence while learning basic skills and concepts," Dr. Cooke said. "We never use worksheets in our classrooms. Rather, we present a wide range of learning centers in which children 'play to learn.' This includes dramatic play, block building, art, science, writing and more."

Choosing a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)-accredited preschool program ensures parents have selected the highest quality early childhood experience. NAEYC accreditation requires a long-term commitment to meeting strict quality standards. As an NAEYC-accredited program, Egenolf Early Childhood Center has gone through a rigorous process to comply with 400 indicators of quality.

Egenolf Early Childhood Center is located at 725 Newark Ave. For more information or to schedule a tour, visit EgenolfECC.org or call 908-352-7508.



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