

Little Wagon Early Care and Education Program Description

小篷车双语幼儿园简介

Paula Phipps (Director)



Little Wagon Early Care and Education Center opened in 2005, is a program of the Cambridge Center for Chinese Culture. We are a bilingual and bicultural early learning center with a multicultural world perspective. We are open to the public. Some of our students arrive speaking only Chinese, some speak primarily or only English, and some are fluent in both languages. We work with children where they are, meaning this program individualizes curriculum, as well as having a core curriculum for all the children.

Little Wagon is a preschool, licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) in Massachusetts. Our teachers are or are becoming certified Early Childhood teachers. As a preschool, we are open to children from 2 years 9 months to age 7. Most children leave for kindergarten at age 5, but some have spent their kindergarten year at Little Wagon, too. The class is now a mixed-age group, providing many opportunities for learning social skills for both younger and older children.

The school day alternates between times when the children choose what activities they want to engage in and times when there are teacher-directed activities. The day also alternates times when the children are physically active with quieter table-centered activities. Teachers may work with children individually, in small groups or in a large group. The teacher/child ration is 1:5.

Mandarin and English are spoken during the entire day. Some lessons are taught in one language exclusively, but in general both languages are used and the children become comfortable switching back and forth in their play depending on the language abilities of the children who are playing or working together. Many children become adept translators for their peers.

The development of social skills such as sharing, taking turns, listening, cooperating, empathy, using words instead of actions is an important part of the curriculum. We also pay close attention to the development of large and fine motor, self-help, academic and creative skills.

The children learn Chinese through songs, games, frequent conversations, reading books, and the Chinese Study Program. Understanding, speaking, and reading in English is taught through an

emergent literacy approach: frequent individual and small group conversations, reading books, & the use of a phonics-based word families and whole word approach. Writing and reading are integrated. Children who arrive at age 3 speaking only Chinese move on to Kindergarten fluent in English and reading at or beyond Kindergarten level. Print is taught using the Handwriting Without Tears program.

Chinese and western experiences of art are available to the children. Teachers model and teach techniques such as paper folding, paper cutting, clay (play dough) modeling. The development of fine motor skills in drawing, coloring and cutting is emphasized more than in most western preschools. However easel painting and other art activities where process rather than product is the goal are also respected and available.

The science that we teach at Little Wagon is largely the Earth Sciences. We are located next to the Beaverbrook Reservation and spend time there every day that weather permits. The children learn about birds, insects, plants, animals, leaves, trees, seasons, life cycles, rocks and the formation of earth. Math and analytic skills are also part of the curriculum. Children leave for Kindergarten able to add, and some can also do subtraction.

The school is a happy, active learning environment where the children begin to take responsibility for themselves and for others - and become aware of the larger world and their responsibilities to that as well.



Information about tuition and school policies can be found at www.littlewagon.org. You can email the director, Paula Phipps, at paula@littlewagon.org. or call 781-788-8558.