



Early Childhood Education Program

"Children who attend well-planned, high-quality early childhood programs in which curriculum aims are specified and integrated across domains tend to learn more and are better prepared to master the complex demands of formal schooling."

— from *Eager to Learn* (2001), National Research Council, Washington, D.C.

NSA West will offer a premier early childhood learning center in Highlands Ranch this fall. Our program is designed to appeal to families who want their child exposed to a higher level of learning early in life than traditional child care or preschool. Our goal is to make our early childhood education program the best in the community in terms of curriculum, facility design and the quality of our educators.

The NSA West Early Childhood Education program will accept children from preschool through pre-kindergarten, ages 3 through 5. The program will have the capacity to serve 100 children at full enrollment with three full-time staff members and three part-time assistants. The program will be administered by a Dean of Primary Education whose sole focus will be on the success of the early childhood education and kindergarten programs at NSA West.

For the 2010-2011 school year, NSA West's Early Childhood Education Program will offer a preschool program serving 80 students in three different classrooms. Please review the Enrollment and Tuition page for specific enrollment guidelines.

Our Mission

To support a high quality team of educators focused on providing a nurturing, content-rich academic program which enables children of primary age to fully prepare to enter grade school with confidence.

Core Knowledge Curriculum

NSA West has developed a high quality program to give primary children an exceptional early learning experience based on best practices in early childhood education. Our program differentiates itself through its quality Core Knowledge preschool program with integrated Spanish language instruction.

NSA West believes that the most important years of a child's brain development and learning patterns occur from infancy to age five. The Core Knowledge Preschool curriculum, based on over fifteen years experience with early childhood learning, is

aimed at total child development. The program focuses on a balance of experiences and activities including:

- Physical well-being and coordination
- Social and emotional development
- Varied approaches to learning, language development, knowledge acquisition and cognitive development

Core Knowledge (CK) preschool educators use a wide variety of teaching strategies, groupings, and materials to help children learn the knowledge and skills specified in the CK Preschool Sequence. Core Knowledge Preschool Professional Development provides educators with many options for teaching each area of the Preschool Sequence, including planning activities for large and small group instruction, incorporating learning into center play, and so on.

Assessment is also an integral part of effective teaching. When conducted properly, it is an on-going process, carried out within the context of the regular classroom routine and daily activities. By using the results obtained through assessment, our preschool educators will know where to begin instruction with each child and how to proceed. Each child's progress will be monitored to ensure that knowledge and skills are being learned. Parents will have the opportunity to conference with ECE educators regularly regarding their student's progress.

NSA West's ECE program will become an Official Core Knowledge Preschool by the 2013/14 school year. This recognition demonstrates a commitment to the Core Knowledge curriculum and philosophies. Official Core Knowledge Preschools are recognized nationally and are open to visitation by others.

In addition, the ECE program will become an accredited preschool program with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) by the 2012/2013 school year. Accredited schools are held to stringent standards and are looked to as the highest quality educational programs.

Additional information regarding the Core Knowledge Preschool program is available on the national Core Knowledge website at www.coreknowledge.org.

Spanish Language Instruction

Studies indicate that “young children in foreign language programs have tended to demonstrate greater cognitive development, creativity and divergent thinking than monolingual children.” (Bruck, Lambert, and Tucker, 1974; Hakuta, 1986; Weatherford, 1986).

NSA West will offer Spanish language instruction to students in its early childhood education program. This program will introduce students to basic age-appropriate vocabulary through meaningful context (ie: songs) and provide a foundation for the school's Foreign Language in Elementary Schools (FLES) Spanish program that begins in kindergarten.

Facility Design

The NSA West Early Childhood Education program is specifically designed for children ages 3-5 and will be housed in the NSA West facility, located at 6161 Business Center Drive in Highlands Ranch. The facility will provide an exceptionally secure and nurturing environment, following all state laws for early childhood education facilities. The program will be located in its own space, with its own entrance/exit, and its own age-appropriate outdoor playground, which may at times be shared with NSA West kindergarten students. Preschool and pre-kindergarten students will also have an exclusive pick-up and drop-off area to maintain safety.

Preschool rooms will have 18-20 children per class, and will be taught by one Lead Teacher and one Assistant. In year one, there will be four preschool classes serving a total of 80 children. In year two, the program will expand to include a total of 100 children in five classes.

High Quality Staff

NSA West provides extraordinary support for the child's team of educators so they can focus on teaching, instill a love of learning in each child and ensure every student is prepared for a smooth transition into kindergarten and beyond, whether attending NSA West or another elementary school in the area. Educators will come to our ECE program with previous ECE experience and Lead classroom teachers will be certified in primary education. The school's professional development program will provide all of our educators and administrators with opportunities for continuous development of their skills based on a clear needs assessment that result in an improvement of our school program.

In addition, the Core Knowledge Foundation provides a range of support services for schools implementing its CK Preschool Program. All educators will participate in a wide range of training opportunities offered by the Core Knowledge Foundation prior to school starting and throughout the school year.

NSA West is also committed to creating opportunities for school staff to learn from each other and to learn from other educational professionals through the sharing of lessons learned and best practices. Educators in the early childhood education program will meet regularly with the school's kindergarten staff to discuss teaching strategies and curriculum with opportunities to share and develop lesson plans. The school also plans to hire a mix of experienced and novice educators and provide a culture that values mentoring and sharing of ideas

Additional information on NSA West's Early Childhood Education Program:

- Program Overview
- Core Knowledge Preschool
- Tuition and Enrollment

