



Northminster Learning Center

"Carriers of the Light"

Kevin Michael Curtin
Director

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Associate Director

Essentials Elements of the Northminster Learning Center

- **Our Facility** ~ Designed by Dr. Judy Harris-Helm, one of America's leading experts in the field of Early Childhood Education. Our facility boasts large, spacious classrooms each designed and furnished in a way that creates a warm, inviting atmosphere. The inspiration for our classroom design is based on research that comes out of Italy that is called Reggio Emilia.
 - **Large Outdoor Play Space**- Immediately adjacent to the Center is a large outdoor space for the children to run and play. The space includes a large sandbox, a swingset with 6 swings, an intricate climbing area as well as plenty of open area for other activities.
 - **Large Indoor Play Space** - When the weather is inclement (rain, snow, cold) we are able to move inside where we have access to a full size gymnasium. Not only are the children able to run freely throughout but we also have a wide array of scooters, tricycles, wagons, ball etc that allow the children to also develop further their eye-hand coordination.
 - **Art Studio** - The Learning Center also has a full service Atelier (Art Studio) which is fully devoted to expanding the artistic nature of our students.
- **Nature Explore Classroom** - Carved directly into the forest that adjoins the NLC is fully certified "**Nature Explore Classroom**". This beautiful learning space contains elements similar to those found inside the NLC classrooms. The NEC "stations" are designed to allow the children to interact with nature in a way that connects them to our precious Earth. Rather than an alternate play space, activities held here include planting and watering seeds' experimenting with sound, studying clouds and other weather patterns among many others.
 - **Nature Trail** - Complementing our Nature Explore Classroom is our Nature Trails that not only encompasses our Nature Explore space but also travels the full length of the adjoining forest which includes a stop at a frog pond. A large bridge takes the trail across a deep gully in which can be seen any number of different plants and flowers. The children walk the trail each month on what is called "Trail Tuesday". During the course of these "hikes" the children gather artifacts indicative of the time of year. By the month of May the children will have experienced and studies the full life cycle of the forest.
- **Highly Qualified, Veteran Administrators** - **The Center Director** spent 25 years as an Elementary School Principal. He possesses a deep and keen understanding of the importance of early learning as well as those elements that are needed to properly prepare a child for a life of self-sufficient learning. The **Associate Director** has 12 years experience here at the NLC having served first as an Associate Teacher which was followed by time spent as a Lead Teacher. Now in her role as Associate Director she is on the cutting edge of Early Childhood research and best practice.
- **Highly Qualified, Veteran Staff** - All Lead Teachers hold Bachelors Degrees in Education. Average years of experience as an Early Childhood educator exceeds 10 years.
- **Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum** - With the *Project Approach* as a foundation, our curriculum is focused directly on providing our children with the skills necessary to truly become self-sufficient, lifelong learners. Children are provided opportunities to become real "Young Investigators" armed with an ability to ask good quality, higher level questions. The Illinois Early Learning Standards provide us with

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our compass with the Common Core also utilized in our Kindergarten class. In addition to our academic program we also take time to ensure that our children are properly equipped socially and emotionally. Conflict resolution and anger management topics are frequently discussed in classroom small group time. Add to this ample time to run and play as well as time to sing and dance, NLC children are exposed to all aspects of being a well rounded boy and girl.

- **Kindergarten-** Our class is offered as a response to the unfortunate way that Kindergarten classrooms have been transformed throughout the past decade. With the nationwide push to raise scores on achievement tests, most curriculums were pushed down into Kindergarten which, in effect, made them resemble a first grade classroom. We are seeking to return Kindergarten to what it truly and developmentally should be. With a firm focus on preparing our students for first grade, our classroom has woven into its daily schedule ample time for the children to spend in classroom centers where true, play based, practical learning takes place. The Common Core, Illinois Early Learning Standards as well as local school district curriculum guides are utilized in the planning our instruction. With an experienced and gifted teacher and a class size that does not exceed 15, our Kindergarten class is a very powerful way to prepare children the rest of their educational journey.
- **Wrap Around Services:**
 - ❖ **Before and Aftercare** - Busy family schedules of children enrolled in any of our full day programs are accommodated through our provision of these services with children able to be dropped off as early as 7:30 a.m. and then picked up as late as 5:30 p.m. . Children enrolled in our half day programs have access to these programs also.
 - ❖ **After school and holiday programming:** When the preschool day ends we welcome the arrival of area students in grades K-5 whose day has just ended. Children are able to spend time eating an after school snack, doing homework and playing outside or in our large gym. On school holidays the children can spend the day in a relaxing but structured atmosphere with a day filled with fun, engaging activities.
 - ❖ **Summer Camp-** From the moment school ends until the day school reopens, children are able to attend our Summer Camp. Weekly themes direct daily activities with field trips which include a visit to a local swimming pool included. It's a wonderful way to beat the doldrums of a long Summer break.
- **Godly Play** - The Learning Center is a ministry of Northminster Presbyterian Church. As such we utilize an approach known as "Godly Play" to share the Gospel through introducing the children to the foundational stories of the Bible. Beginning in Genesis and traveling up to Jesus' death and triumphant resurrection and beyond, Godly play not only shares the essential elements of our faith, it also shares to foundational notion of Love and all that means. From our youngest preschoolers to our oldest after school child, we are all about spreading the light of God to all who enter in.

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