



## Akiba-Schechter Kindergarten Curriculum

The Akiba-Schechter Kindergartens are rich, exciting classes of eager learners and dedicated teachers. Our Kindergarten program is a full-day program for children who are 5 years old by September 1. The Kindergarten curriculum includes language arts, math, social studies and science, Judaic culture, special topic classes, and enrichment activities.

Throughout the school year, the kindergartens explore these curriculum areas through the lens of particular secular and Judaic themes. Highlights of these themes include:

The Oceans — exploring the world below, including a field trip to the Shedd Aquarium;

100<sup>th</sup> Day of School Celebration — learning to count to 100 by 2's, 5's, 10's, and much more.

Artists and their Masterpieces — students learn about and create art of several artistic styles;

Chanukah Celebration — including an Akiba tradition: a Chanukah performance where the kindergartners and pre-k classes join the grades to perform medley of songs;

Passover Seders — each child creates a Haggadah (prayer book), learns to sing the four questions and the significance of the holiday.

Young Authors Study — culminating with each student becoming the author and illustrator of their own book. It even includes a section to learn about the author.

Fairytales — the students dive in to the world of castles, kings, queens, princesses and much more. They learn to look for similarities and differences and compare and contrast. We culminate the unit by seeing a performance. Recent examples are the *Three Little Pigs* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

Dinosaurs — this includes an in-depth study of a time long ago learning such vocabulary as carnivore, herbivore, palaeontologist, and fossils. Using recyclables, paper mache, and paint, the children create a "Dinosaur Land."

All About Me — the children explore what makes each of them special. They create a mini version of themselves while examining skin color, eye color, hair, and much more. Each child takes home a "Me Bag" to fill with items at home and bring back to class to share more about themselves with their friends.

### Language Arts

Language Arts are integrated throughout the entire kindergarten curriculum with emphasis on letter recognition, sounds and formation, and inventive spelling. Since the kindergarten is play-orientated and is designed for child-initiated activities, children's language experiences are developed through play in multiple learning centers around the room, including the writing center and art center, as well as in the house corner, reading and listening center, and block corner. Children enjoy using their inventive spelling in writing letters, making shopping lists, taking phone messages, making books, and creating signs.

Group time is also an essential part of our language arts experience. We act out stories written by the children, read and write poems, enjoy shared reading, sing songs, and play games.

### Math

Kindergarten math is taught as a hands-on-experience. Key concepts include patterns, classifying/sorting, decoding, problem solving, number recognition, and simple addition/subtraction. Children play with blocks, geo boards, pattern blocks, beads, board games, number puzzles, and various other math manipulatives. Through these manipulatives a child can intuitively learn abstract concepts such as addition, subtraction and fractions.

The math experience is also enhanced in our daily meeting when we discuss the calendar, count the days of school, prepare snacks, cook, and makes graphs – such as keeping track of how many sunny days there are in a month. The children love to graph, vote when there is a conflict of choice, make "gestimations" and measure.

### **Social Studies and Science**

Social Studies and science experiences are integrated throughout our entire program both formally and informally. We emphasize taking turns, patience, conflict resolution, and respecting one's self and others.

Science opportunities come from pets, cooking, planting or discoveries in the sand/water table, or more formal experiments conducted in the science center. In the fall we have a module on apples and fruit trees. Children learn to question, observe and infer through their experimentation.

In Social Studies children learn to appreciate themselves, to be an integral part of a group, and a responsible member of society. Together we celebrate holidays and go on educational fieldtrips in and around Chicago.

### **Art and Music**

Most of our daily activities involve some art and music. In addition to informal singing and art opportunities, once a week the children attend art and music classes with specialist teachers. Visual arts are used to enhance our Language Art and Judaic curriculum.

### **Judaic Culture**

Our Judaic curriculum is designed to create an excitement about Judaism, its customs, laws, celebrations, and language. Children study language through an oral approach during morning meeting prayers, group time, blessings before and after meals, and Shabbat blessings and songs. Hebrew is offered three times a week. In addition, children are exposed to Judaism through our fully integrated curriculum, which includes songs, games and observance of all Jewish holidays.

### **Specials**

Art and music are two of the special classes all kindergartners attend. In addition, the kindergarten's other weekly specials are gym, library, yoga, and swimming (in season). These specialized classes allow the students to interact with other teachers and help develop fine motor, gross motor, and social skills as well as broadening their cognitive abilities.

### **Enrichment**

The Akiba-Schechter Kindergarten engages in a diverse set of enrichment activities. These include a monthly newspaper written by the students ([Click here to download a sample](#)), participation in the all-school play, reading buddies with the grade students, collaborating with the grade students on a science project and tracking its development, and doing a mitzvah project around the school or in the community.

### **Integration with other Akiba-Schechter classes**

At Akiba, we encourage learning across age groups and create opportunities for multi-age groups to work together on projects or share holiday celebrations. For example, the kindergarten often has Friday Shabbat celebrations with younger students – this gives the Kindergartners an opportunity to mentor the younger children and gives the younger children a window in to the kindergarten classroom. We find this integrated approach also eases the transition from pre-K to K. Similarly, the kindergarten collaborates with the Akiba-Schechter grade school students, including the all-school play and taking a field trip to an apple orchard with the 1<sup>st</sup> /2<sup>nd</sup> grade class as part of the Kindergarten's Fall Harvest theme.

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For more information, contact Carla Goldberg or Jill Beigel at 773.493.8880