

Early Childhood Education Program FAQs

Program Specifics

What are the Early Childhood Education Program hours?

Our regular Full-Day hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We offer Extended-Day hours from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for a limited number of families at an extra cost. If we have more families interested than we have slots available for Extended-Day hours, there will be a lottery to determine who can attend during this timeframe.

What program options are available?

SIX-HOUR

The Six-Hour program begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m.

FULL-DAY

Our Full-Day option allows for arrivals and departures at any time between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

EXTENDED-DAY

Our Extended-Day option allows for arrivals between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. and is available for a limited number of families at an extra cost.

PRESCHOOL AND TODDLER CLASSROOMS

Our toddler rooms serve children between the ages of 16 months and 3 years. Our preschool and pre-k rooms are mixed-age rooms for children 3-5 years old. If your child turns 3 on or before October 1, they are eligible to be in our preschool/pre-k rooms for the summer and/or school year sessions.

SCHEDULED DAYS

We offer two-, three-, and five-day-per-week schedules. The two-day per week schedules are offered on a limited basis and only if we can match it with another child's schedule.

What are the benefits of mixed-age classrooms?

Within our classrooms, children benefit from learning alongside peers of different ages. This setting offers unique opportunities to grow socially, emotionally, and cognitively through:

- *Opportunities to lead and learn:* Children take turns being mentors and learners, building confidence and collaboration.
- *Stronger social-emotional skills:* Interacting across age and ability fosters empathy, patience, and adaptability.
- *Deeper, more meaningful learning:* Children reinforce their own understanding by observing and supporting others.
- *Appreciation of differences:* Daily experiences with diverse peers nurture respect and inclusion.
- *Stable, lasting relationships:* Longer time with consistent teachers and classmates supports emotional security and belonging.

What is looping?

Looping is the process of keeping children with the same teachers over multiple years. Toddlers will have one teaching team until they move to preschool. After transitioning to preschool, children have the same teaching team for two years and on their third year will transition to a new classroom. This allows children to practice a transition in a safe environment before moving onto kindergarten. Looping allows our teachers to build deeper relationships with children and families and intentionally tailor the classroom environment to the needs of each child. Looping also provides a great benefit to children's peer relationships as they build community, learn from one another, and maintain friendships as they age. If individual or program needs warrant a transition in teaching teams, ECE Program specialists, supervisors, and teachers work closely with families to plan transitions and build relationships with new peers and staff.

Will my child be provided with snacks and lunch?

St. David's will provide your child with nutritious mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks. Parents will need to provide a healthy lunch for their child. St. David's will provide milk with lunch and snacks.

Enrollment

I am a new family. When should I apply?

For each new enrollment period, applications will be available on the website early February each calendar year. These applications are for the following summer and school year enrollment.

How does your enrollment process work?

When families apply, the enrollment team reviews applications and may contact you to learn more about your child. Families will be notified by the end of March with the status of your application.

What are your enrollment decisions based on?

Our enrollment capacity is influenced by various factors, including classroom space, child age, our commitment to low child-teacher ratios, and the specific dynamics and needs within each classroom. We are intentional about how we create our classroom communities to ensure every child is successful.

What happens if I am placed on the waitlist?

We keep a waitlist throughout the year, and we will notify you if a spot opens for your child. Because we strive to create a balanced classroom, our enrollment capacity is influenced by various factors, including classroom space, child age, our commitment to low child-teacher ratios, and the specific dynamics and needs within each classroom. If openings become available for your child, our enrollment team will reach out.

Do you require any hold fees to secure enrollment?

For all new families, to guarantee your child's enrollment, we require a deposit of 50% of one month's tuition for each child attending. The enrollment deposit is non-refundable and due at the time we confirm enrollment. Once attending ECE, your enrollment deposit will go toward your first month of tuition in ECE.

Inclusion

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion is one of St. David's core values. Inclusion means children of all abilities learn alongside each other in our classrooms. As leaders in inclusion, we know children make greater developmental gains when they learn together in the same environment. Children with special needs make greater progress when included with their typically developing peers, and typically developing children make greater progress, as they have increased opportunities for leadership, empathy, and compassion. An inclusive classroom helps children gain an appreciation of diversity and encourages them to become more confident and comfortable with peers of all abilities. At St. David's, we believe children are set up for success when they are learning and playing alongside children of diverse abilities, races, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

Our classrooms focus heavily on social-emotional development, which is the cornerstone for all development and the greatest indicator of later success. We believe all children have something unique to offer, and we believe in celebrating differences. In learning about others, children gain a better understanding of themselves and their own strengths and needs.

How does inclusion work at St. David's?

Our classrooms maintain a careful balance between the specific gifts and the unique needs of each child to provide the specialized care and attention that makes our program unique, with each room staffed by three teachers who support all children's needs. Children who have diagnoses, receive pediatric therapies, and/or who have an IFSP or IEP through the school district have a care plan that includes collaboration between the teaching staff and other relevant providers.

While our program is inclusive, with our current child/teacher ratios and program structure, we are unable to support children when there are continued safety concerns for the children and teachers in the classroom. Examples of this include children who are unable to stay with the group and children who display physical aggression that is not responsive to classroom strategies. The larger St David's Organization has additional programs to support children who would benefit from a different learning environment or require more one on one support. Our care coordinator can help facilitate those connections.

What does Inclusion look like in your classrooms?

The inclusive nature of our classrooms means our teachers effectively differentiate their instruction for all abilities and learning styles through our curriculum, the set-up of the classroom environment, the materials offered, and the daily routines. Our classrooms are filled with resources and tools that all children have access to and that support our children's individual needs throughout the day. In addition, daily routines are consistent and created with developmentally appropriate practices in mind. For example, transitions and wait times are limited, and children are given options for how they want to participate during group times to increase learning and engagement.

Common resources found in our classrooms include:

- Alone zones (calming spaces).
- Noise-cancelling headphones.
- Stretchy bands.
- Chew tubes.
- Wiggle seats.
- Cube chairs.
- Rifton chairs.
- Weighted lap blankets.
- Various small fidget items.
- Bubbles (for hand-eye coordination and calming).
- Social stories.
- Visual schedules.
- Visual timers.

Curriculum and Ratios

What is your teacher-to-child ratio?

Our program is committed to maintaining lower child-to-staff ratios to foster each child's social and emotional development, cognitive development, communication and language skills, and higher social competence. These lower ratios help build strong, healthy, and quality interactions between teachers and children.

- Toddlers: Our toddler-to-teacher ratios are approximately 1:5, and our toddler classrooms will not exceed 14 children with three teachers.
- Preschool/pre-k: These ratios are approximately 1:8. Our preschool rooms have no more than 18 children with three teachers.

What curriculum do you use?

We use the High Scope Curriculum in our program, and our classroom environments are inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy. We also leverage the expertise of our leadership team and staff by incorporating their knowledge of how to support children with varying needs into our curriculum. Our teaching staff use the High Scope Curriculum to create weekly lesson plans based on all the children's interests, strengths, and areas of need. They use pictures and documentation to ensure children are making progress across all areas of development and working toward identified goals. Our low student-to-teacher ratio allows all children to receive more individualized attention.

How do you prepare children for school?

There are many ways our classrooms help prepare your child for school and it starts with what research tells us matter most: social-emotional development. High Scope curriculum is designed to nurture both academic and social-emotional growth. Decades of studies show that the skills that best predict school success are rooted in a child's ability to:

- Think flexibly and adapt to new situations
- Visualize tasks before doing them
- Tune out distractions and focus on what matters
- Name and manage their emotions
- Build strong, positive relationships
- Stay curious and ask questions
- Keep trying, even when things are hard
- Solve problems creatively and confidently