



Preschool Program

Opening September 2010

Introduction

Touchstone's Preschool is a half-day program for 3-and 4-year olds, five days per week from September through June. It is a high-quality learning program in which students learn number sense, literacy, music, French, science, art, and movement in a play-based, hands-on environment. Touchstone's philosophy is that children learn best when given the opportunity to actively construct their own knowledge through meaningful experiences and hands-on investigations. Our curriculum is enriched with regular field trips to historical, cultural, and scientific sites. Touchstone's Preschool Program has a maximum of 17 children, with two qualified teachers at all times.

Mission and Key Objectives

Imagine a school ...

- where students, parents, and teachers strive for academic excellence in an exciting, creative environment
- where the basics are taught, but the learning always goes far beyond
- where the unique strengths of individuals are developed and critical thinking, self worth, self-discipline, and pro-social behaviour are cultivated

To this end, Touchstone commits itself to the following objectives:

- Supporting an environment in which students, teachers, and parents work in partnership
- Striving for academic excellence
- Maintaining small classes
- Providing a creative environment that encourages hands-on collaborative learning
- Teaching an expanded and challenging curriculum
- Enriching the curriculum with regular field trips to historical, cultural, and scientific sites
- Respecting students' curiosity and interests and developing their unique gifts

Preschool Daily Schedule

8:05–8:25	Drop-off
8:30–8:45	Circle Time
8:45–9:10	Language Arts/Math Centres
9:10–9:30	Movement and Coordination (en français)
9:30–9:50	Outdoor Recess
9:50–10:05	Snack
10:05–10:25	Science Centres
10:25–10:45	Music/Art
10:45–11:15	Free Play/Social Skills
11:15–11:30	Circle Time
11:30	Pick-up

Field Trips

Children in Touchstone’s Preschool Program will benefit from monthly field trips that provide safe, fun, and age-appropriate learning experiences. Parents are welcome to join the class for these great outings.

Parent Involvement

Our first founding objective states that Touchstone commits to “supporting an environment in which students, teachers, and parents work in partnership”. As such, parents have many opportunities to be involved in their child’s education. Each family at Touchstone sits on at least one volunteer committee. Our committees are as diverse as our parent community. Single parent families, families with one working parent, or families with two working parents can all find a niche where they can contribute to the school. For a current list of Touchstone committees, please visit our [website](#).

Application Process

For a detailed description of Touchstone’s application process, please visit our website and click on [Admissions](#).

We encourage families to complete the [Application Form](#) by January 31st; however, we do accept applications year-round.

Please enclose a \$500 deposit with the application form. If you submit the application form via e-mail, please mail your deposit to the school. The deposit and all subsequent fees are non-refundable, unless your child is not accepted into the school. Upon acceptance to the school, the \$500 deposit is credited to your child's tuition for the year.

Tuition and Payment Schedule

Touchstone’s Preschool Program runs for 38 weeks per year. The cost is \$115 per week for 3-year olds and \$100 per week for 4-year olds. The tuition is to be paid over 10 months beginning in May of the year of admission and is based on the age of your child on the first day of school. There is also a \$125 field trip fee per child that is due on the first day of school.

A Sampling of Curriculum Objectives

Language Arts:

- Read high-quality children’s literature, and relate story events and characters to one’s own experiences
- Make predictions about stories
- Give the beginning sound of a spoken word
- Pair pictures depicting opposites (big-little, cold-hot, full-empty, etc.)
- Use quantity words (many, more, equal, less, some, any)
- Clap the beat to a familiar rhyme or poem
- “Retell” a story that has been read aloud
- Point to the title of a book, to where to start reading, to a word, and to a letter
- Draw a spiral, a zigzag line, diagonal lines, wavy lines, a circle, a “cane”

Movement and Coordination:

Movement and Coordination is delivered in French. Children learn a second language best by being immersed in the language in a playful and active way.

- Climb, roll, jump, slide, crawl, somersault
- Maintain balance while walking forward, backward, and sideways on a balance beam
- Construct and use fun obstacle courses
- Develop eye-hand and eye-foot coordination skills
- Play group games such as Drop the Handkerchief and Kitty Wants a Corner
- Participate in relay races

Science Centres:

- Classify images of animals according to the habitat in which they live
- Plant, care for, and record observations of a plant
- Explore the five human senses
- Investigate human, animal, and plant life cycles
- Examine different kinds of animals (insects, spiders, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mammals) and plants (trees, bushes, grasses, flowers, vines, weeds)

- Explore the basic properties of air, light, and water
- Learn how to take care of the Earth
- Explore magnetism

Math Centres:

- Create or build shapes with markers or your body
- Use spatial words (there, under, next to, in-between, near, etc.)
- Compare the length and height of objects (taller, longer, shorter, etc.)
- Given a number, create a group with the correct number of objects (up to 6)
- Copy a tower or construction that has been made by another person, using blocks of different shapes, colors, or sizes

Music:

- Listen to and sing songs
- Listen to and move to music of different styles and periods
- Discriminate between a fast and slow beat, high and low pitch, and loud and soft sounds
- Recognize instruments by sight and sound

Art:

- Experiment with collage, painting, drawing, printing, sculpture, and sewing
- Learn about specific works of art from well-known artists
- Look at art from a variety of cultures and traditions

Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I send my 3- or 4-year-old to Touchstone's Preschool Program?

The understanding of early learning has dramatically increased in recent years. The belief that people are born with a fixed intellectual capability is outdated. It is now known that the right kind of stimulation early on dramatically affects children's capacity to learn for the rest of their lives. Touchstone's teachers have learned that our students benefit from high-quality learning experiences before entering kindergarten.

How will Touchstone's Preschool Program be different from other preschools?

In a play-based, hands-on environment, our students explore number sense, literacy, music, French, science, art, and movement. The environment at Touchstone is supportive, creative, and enriching, and our teachers use exploration and discovery rather than drills and worksheets. Our curriculum and assessments are structured, but the activities are always creative, fun, and hands-on. Many preschools do not have a coherent and sequenced curriculum, but rather a set of beliefs on how children learn.

Does Touchstone use a teacher-directed approach or a student-directed approach?

Touchstone uses a wide range of teaching strategies. Sometimes it is most effective to present a skill in a small group, planned and directed by the teacher. Sometimes a skill is learned best when children play together in learning centres. Other times, the whole class comes together to explore topics. Our students are also given lots of time for free-play to develop their social skills and learn together.

Will the 3- and 4-year-olds in the preschool program work together?

Since the goals of the preschool program are to help students progress to their full potential and to provide challenging learning experiences, the two groups will work together when it is beneficial to the students.

Shouldn't children just be free to do what they want at this age?

The beauty of Touchstone's program is that the students will not be aware of the structure that is behind their play. We believe that students' interest in learning grows when they are exposed to topics that are new and exciting to them. When students grow their own plants and learn about the art of Degas and Matisse, their world expands. Our *framework* is structured, but we allow students to learn in a way that comes naturally to them.

What about students' own ideas and interests?

Touchstone prides itself on respecting students' curiosity and interests and developing their unique gifts. In fact, this is one of our seven main objectives.

My child is very active and just wants to run around and have fun.

The learning at Touchstone uses this enthusiasm for exploration in all activities: dancing to music, cooking when learning about measurement, playing math games, and constructing architectural masterpieces out of blocks.

I don't want my child to have structured art lessons. I just want her to have the opportunity to be creative.

So do we. There is an important difference between art and craft. In art, the only goal is creativity. Craft involves following directions and copying someone else's sample (for example, everyone making the same snowman with cotton balls); the creativity does not come from the child. Touchstone's art program consists mainly of art, with minimal craft. To us, the process is so much more important than the end product.

Why is Movement and Coordination in French rather than having a specific French language class?

Students learn a new language best when they are exposed to it in an active way. Hearing "Throw me the ball" in French each day is more effective than *teaching* a child the French words for "throw" and "ball" in a classroom setting.

How will you select students to join the Touchstone Preschool Program?

All children would benefit from Touchstone's Preschool Program; however, if we feel, that our program will not meet a child's learning or emotional needs, we will inform the parents as soon as possible. For more details, please see our [Acceptance Policy](#).

Why does Touchstone not have a full-day preschool program?

Touchstone's Preschool Program is not a daycare program. It is a high-quality learning program. When students are not at Touchstone, they can be with their families, playing with friends, or attending a half-day daycare.

How will parents be informed of their child's progress?

As in our elementary level, our parents will receive two detailed progress reports and have three parent/teacher conferences each year. In addition, parents will have the opportunity to chat with their child's teacher briefly before or after school each day. Parents can also set up meetings with their child's teacher at any time.

For more information or further questions, please call 847-2673 and speak with the Principal, Jeff McAloon, or the Head of Academics, Tasha vanderLinde.