



WELCOME

New Tools of the Mind PreK Teachers

Welcome! We are so happy you're here. Your school is investing in you and the children you serve by providing you with the Tools of the Mind curriculum and approach to professional development. Our goal with this packet is to introduce you to Tools and familiarize you with our curriculum and approach to teaching and learning.

We recognize that each teacher is unique. You may have been teaching for many years or just starting your career. We strive to match our professional development to fit each teacher's unique needs, just as the Tools curriculum is designed to help you, as a teacher, target your interactions with children in individualized ways.

As you begin our workshops, you will learn that teaching with Tools of the Mind is more about *how* you teach rather than *what* you teach. So please, hold on to all your favorite poems, books, songs, games, and manipulatives. Throughout our time together, we will discuss how they can fit into the Tools curriculum.

We look forward to partnering with you for a wonderful school year!

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**TOOLS
OF THE
MIND**

Preschool

WHAT MAKES TOOLS UNIQUE?

In a Tools of the Mind preschool classroom:

- ✓ **Practice in self-regulated learning is embedded in all activities**
- ✓ **Teachers use strategies to help children improve the quality of their make-believe play, so it fosters self-regulation development**
- ✓ **All classroom activities are designed to promote social-emotional and self-regulation development**
- ✓ **Classroom management techniques maximize instructional time, increasing teacher to student and student to student interactions and task engagement**

WHAT IS SELF-REGULATION?

To learn in elementary school and be successful students, all children must develop the ability to self-regulate. Self-regulation encompasses emotions, physical behavior, social interactions, and the ability to monitor and control cognitive processes such as attention. It includes the ability to:

- **Manage emotions**
- **Focus and sustain attention**
- **Ignore distractions**
- **Remember on purpose**
- **Hold two strategies in mind at the same time**
- **Persist in challenging tasks**

“ Play creates the zone of proximal development of the child. In play, the child is always behaving beyond his age, above his usual every day behavior; in play, he is, as it were, a head above himself. Play contains in a concentrated form, as in the focus of a magnifying glass, all developmental tendencies; it is as if the child tries to jump above his usual level. -LEV VYGOTSKY



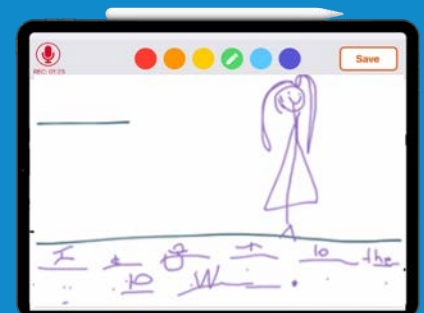
Tools of the Mind Characteristics

- Tools is a comprehensive curriculum, including content that meets all state and national standards. Content is presented in an integrated, developmental way so that instruction forms a coherent whole.
- Instructional strategies used in Tools are a combination of child-initiated activities, teacher scaffolding, explicit instruction, individualization through multiple levels of scaffolding, and ongoing use of assessment data to tailor interactions to meet individual needs. Progress is monitored daily, weekly, and monthly.
- The instructional formats and activities in Tools are research-based.

What is it like to be a tools PreK teacher?

Tools of the Mind is based on specific beliefs about how children develop and learn. The core structure of Tools involves translating Vygotskian principles into practice to amplify development in young children. Tools instructional interactions are planned to scaffold each child and to help teachers be more effective in identifying specific teachable moments. Tools teachers build a repertoire of strategies to support children's cognitive and social-emotional self-regulation development.

Using these strategies, Tools teachers focus on helping children become intentional and reflective learners, creating a classroom in which literacy, mathematics, and science instruction reflect children's learning capacity.



"I am going to be
the postwoman."



WHY IS PLAY CENTRAL IN A TOOLS PREK CLASSROOM?

Mature intentional make-believe play is the foundation of self-regulation development. It creates conditions where young children can act more maturely and use more mature mental functions. Children remember more, attend better, and have better self-regulation. This kind of play is the only classroom experience that naturally provides the three types of interactions which lead to self-regulation: regulation by others, regulation of others, and self-regulation. Without deliberate scaffolding by teachers providing ongoing opportunities to engage in mature play, many young children will not develop it on their own.

In Tools of the Mind, there is an explicit design of literacy, mathematics, and science activities so that they further promote the self-regulation developed in play. This format means that children act regulated in various instructional contexts in school and have an increased ability to control themselves in other settings.



Tools PreK Activity Examples

Buddy Reading

In Buddy Reading, pairs of children "read" books to each other, using external mediator cards to remind them of their roles as they take turns reading and listening. Buddy Reading is one of Tools of the Mind's cooperative partner activities. These activities are designed to foster self-regulation development and positive child-child interaction while fostering emergent literacy or numeracy skills.

Play Planning

Children describe what they will do when they play and then represent their plan on paper in drawing and writing. Children work at their level, adding detail to their drawn plans, using lines to represent words in their written message, and using the Tools of the Mind Sound Map to write letters representing the sounds in their words.

Graphics Practice

In Graphics Practice, children develop the fine motor and self-regulation skills needed for writing. They draw on whiteboards with markers, stopping and starting in response to musical cues. Children use private speech to help them remember how and what to write, learning to inhibit while also remembering the shape they're representing in writing.

Venger Drawing

In small groups, teachers help children plan and discuss various ways to incorporate a geometric shape into a drawing. Children use geometric terms and positional vocabulary, brainstorming possibilities from multiple perspectives. Children verbalize a plan for their drawing and create a unique representation incorporating the geometric shape.

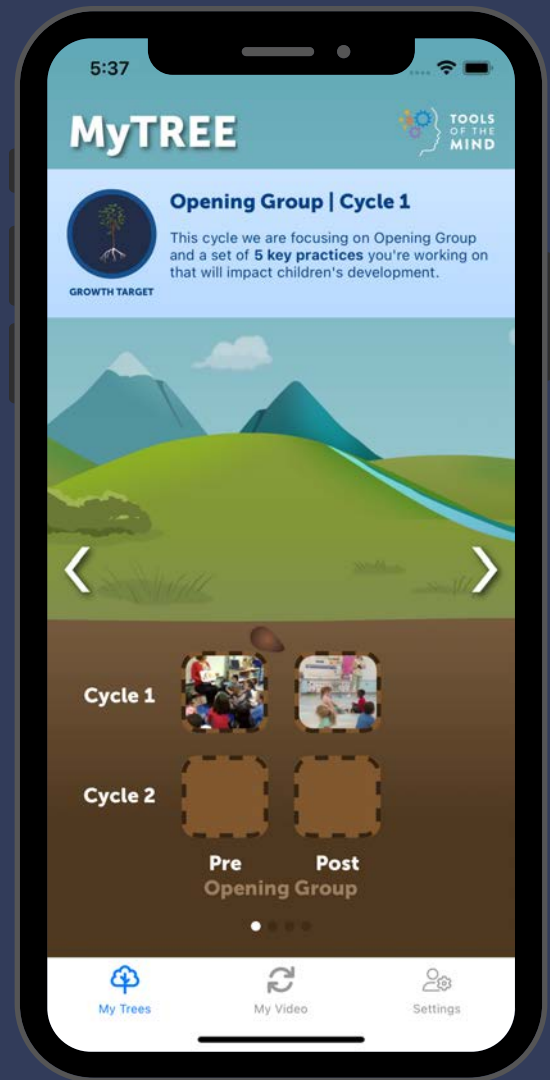
Making Collections

In Making Collections, children work in a cooperative partnered mathematics activity taking turns counting and 'checking' using one-to-one correspondence. Children use Vygotskian tactics such as private speech, external mediators, and other regulation tactics.

The Tools of the Mind Professional Development Experience

While many professional development experiences in Early Childhood are focused on Informative Learning, introducing new content and ideas into teachers' current paradigms, Tools of the Mind's professional development is focused on transformative learning, transforming teachers' understanding of teaching, learning, and child development.

With these goals in mind, Tools' professional development model includes several components. Four workshops, spread throughout the year, help you learn new classroom management techniques, activities, and teaching strategies in manageable chunks that you immediately practice in your classroom. We offer a suite of digital resources on our one-stop Portal, regular PLC (professional learning community) meetings, and individualized professional development with a dedicated Tools team member across the year, supported through our TREE (Teachers Reaching Educational Excellence) video coaching model.



Read below to hear what teachers have to say about the TREE experience!



My experience with TREE has been amazing. I found it very easy to take the videos right on my computer to upload, and the opportunity to reflect is great. In a time when education seems so hard, it was nice to hear that I was doing well. It has been a great learning experience!



I always look forward to the emails letting me know there's feedback on my videos. The feedback from the Tools staff helps improve my teaching practices and gives me confidence as I learn the program.



Through the process, I received excellent feedback and suggestions to support the diverse learners in my classroom. It was nice to look back and see the growth in the children and in myself.



THE TOOLS OF THE MIND CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The Tools Center Design

Most Tools teachers find that much of what they already have in their environment can stay in place. The Tools center arrangement is designed to create a materials-rich learning environment that will support the development of self-regulation by facilitating high-level dramatic play and exploration.

The Tools PreK Classroom has 6 Center Areas:

- Literacy
- Dramatic Play
- Science/ Sensory
- Blocks
- Art/ Fine motor
- Table Toys or Math/ Manipulatives

Essential Classroom Materials

We realize that each classroom has different materials and available resources. Suppose your program is NAEYC accredited or scores above five on the ECERS scale. In that case, your classroom environment already has most of the materials required to implement Tools of the Mind. Tools does not require programs to buy expensive toys and equipment. In fact, many of the best materials are hand-me-downs or can be found at yard sales. As part of the Tools program, teachers can access eTools and other digital resources on our Tools Portal. eTools contains all curricular materials on downloadable pages, and includes a recommended book list. Your program likely already has some books and materials on this list.

The Tools classroom design is built on a foundation of good early childhood practice. For programs looking for specific guidelines about the types of materials to buy, we recommend visiting the NAEYC website to learn about materials found in an accredited classroom and to identify what materials your classroom environment may need.



HOW DO CENTERS WORK IN TOOLS?

Do the children engage in make-believe play in every center?

We believe that children learn through play.

The Tools PreK classroom is organized around intentional make-believe play. All of the centers, the room arrangement, and the materials available for children are designed to promote such play. Teachers often find that they can layer Tools make-believe play elements on top of their regular classroom —rearranging some things and perhaps combining or creating some new center areas. You may want to think about how to utilize the movable furniture already in your classroom – bookshelves, tables, etc., to more clearly define center areas and create cozy spaces, allowing small groups of children to work and play without distraction.

In each of the centers in your classroom, children will engage in imaginative play scenarios, so you will add materials to each center to support play.

At the same time, you will take advantage of the rich materials already in each center and the possibilities these materials have for exploration and incorporation into imaginative play. In this way, the Literacy Center, already rich with writing supplies, might be a center where children explore the writing aspects of a scenario more fully. Still, you'll also put some materials for writing (perhaps clipboards and pencils) in all centers. You'll also find that certain centers, which you haven't previously thought of as spaces for make-believe play, are prime for play themes. The Science Center, which likely has a water/sand table, will be perfect for transforming into a themed area like a pet groomer's shop, car wash, bakery, or restaurant, taking advantage of the potential of materials already there to serve as unique props for make-believe play scenarios.

Your Tools classroom will have materials that help children fully engage in imaginative scenarios, assume different roles, and support make-believe play.

Such materials may include (but are not limited to): dress-up clothes, a kitchen set, blocks, small plastic animals and people, baby dolls, puppets, etc. You can reasonably pick up many of the best materials at yard sales and other alternative outlets. Open-ended materials, such as large pieces of fabric or felt that could be blankets in one scenario, a tablecloth for a picnic in another, and serve as a body of water for fishing in yet another scenario, are ideal. Cardboard boxes, paper towel tubes, and other recyclable materials that parents can donate are perfect for props for Tools of the Mind play; paper towel tubes can be cut to become ice cream cones at an ice cream shop, telescopes or binoculars at a campsite, casts for broken arms on dolls or stuffed animals – possibilities only limited by imagination! You will want a large plastic container to serve as a central prop box and other plastic tubs to collect and sort materials.



PreK Classroom Materials Checklist

Note: The materials kit includes activities and games specific to the Tools curriculum, and the list below contains general classroom materials you will also need.

- Large wipe-off whiteboard (minimum size: 18x24 inches)
- Individual wipe-off whiteboards for the entire class
- Dry-erase markers for the entire class
- Large pocket chart
- Plastic tubs to sort and organize Buddy Reading books (minimum 5)
- Thick and thin tip markers that match center colors (red, green, blue, purple, orange, brown)
- Snap cubes or other small manipulatives
- Recording of song "The Freeze" by Greg & Steve
- Playdough
- Puppet



Additional Materials

- **Tools of the Mind PreK Curriculum Classroom Materials Kit**

From daily schedules and planning sheets to educational games that promote self-regulation, literacy and language arts, these convenient kits help to get your curriculum up and running—eliminating hours of prep work!

- **Materials to Help You Keep Parents Informed**

We know that ongoing and open communication with parents is essential to the success of any program. Tools has created a Parent Curriculum Brochure and Back to School Night presentation to keep parents informed of what is happening in the classroom. You can find these resources on eTools, part of our digital suite of resources found on the Tools Portal.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I get started right now?

Start by doing an inventory of your classroom to see what you have and what you may need. You will want your classroom set up in centers, so thinking about your classroom environment and changes you may need to make would be a proactive way to prepare for implementing Tools. Gathering materials to support dramatic play and developing an organizational system for props used in centers are good ways to get started. The first two play themes are Family and Grocery, so begin gathering boxes, blankets, dress-up clothes, grocery bags, pretend food items, and more to get started!

What materials will I receive?

You will receive a copy of the most recent edition of the Tools of the Mind PreK Activity Manual, a Scaffolded Plan Book, and an Essential Subscription to our Tools Portal, where you will find a suite of digital resources that will support your implementation: eTools, iScaffold, Family Connect, Learn@Home, DWA app, and Tools Community. eTools has downloadable materials for Tools activities.

What will the beginning of the year look like?

You will be doing things you probably did at the beginning of the year in previous years and slowly introducing Tools activities to the children in your class. We expect you to begin only some activities on the first day of school or the first week. We have carefully planned a way to introduce activities gradually to help you and the children become comfortable.

What do I do if I have questions?

First, ask your administrator, Tools of the Mind coach, or master teacher—they may have the answer. Once the year starts, you will be assigned a dedicated Tools team member to look at classroom videos with you on TREE, lead monthly PLC meetings, and support you in your implementation. It's important that you ask questions, and we're committed to helping you – so don't hesitate to reach out!



Advice to New Teachers from Current Tools Teachers



"Take your time learning - approach implementing activities in baby steps."

"The children are going to exceed your expectations. Give it a chance - it works."

"Be open, excited, and always reflective."

"Be confident in your ability to implement the curriculum and give yourself time."

"It starts off overwhelming as all new challenges do... but the rewards are immeasurable."

“

Let it in. It is a different approach than is typical. Do not allow what you're used to to block what could be. This approach allows children to play and learn while giving them the "tools" to learn in years to come.

"Tools of the Mind may be different from what you currently do, but you will really enjoy the change. You have to be open to doing the program completely."

"You will see a change in your approach to teaching, but you will not be sacrificing quality or purposeful, deliberate teaching. Hang in there, take the challenge, the journey is an insightful one!"

We look forward to getting to know and work with you.



Have a wonderful summer!



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www.toolsofthemind.org