

*Meaningful Play: Pre-K Prepares Students
for School Success*

LaVace Stewart Elementary School, Kemah, Texas



Belinda Garcia, Parent: I think it's important for parents to understand Pre-K is not just coloring and knowing the abcs in a song. It's a lot more exposure and gets them ready for Kinder. And when they Kinder, they are ready to take off. They really have a head start.

Britani Creel Moses, Principal: In the Pre-K 3 school classroom we saw a student playing with blocks. A parent might think he is just having free time playing with the blocks, but it's very important to notice the student is using language, talking with the para-professional. He had to come up with a plan, what he is going to create today, he knew the space that was left so really it was connecting him with math as well as using those language skills and thinking skills to decide, "What do I need next to create what I hope to build?"

Nivea Robles, pre-K 4 Teacher: I teach pre-K four-year olds, bilingual kids. We'll be doing writer's workshop, learning how to draw a horse. We use shapes to draw. We use basic shapes like squares, triangles, circles. We talk a lot about lines, straight lines, long lines, short lines. That's a vocabulary we use doing our writing. We use the verbal path when we learn how to write letters.

Brittani Moses: In CCISD, Pre-K teachers are required to have an early childhood certification, a special education certification, and either an ESL certification or Bi-lingual certification. All of these certifications are teaching certificates through the state of Texas.

Sue Christoffersen, pre-K 4 Teacher: When you come in my classroom people see children playing, singing, and dancing. But there is always a purpose. There is always an underlying "I want them to experience this". "I want them to experience that". I want them to build. Instead of asking "How tall are you?" I'll ask how many blocks did you build so I am using math skills their building skills their thinking skills

Brittany Griffis, Kindergarten Teacher: The kids are either reading when they come to us—and if they're not reading they know their letters and sounds and they're right on that verge of starting to read. They have one to one correspondence when they're doing math, so they're able to count. So they definitely have an upper advantage on the students that don't go to pre-K.

Christina Talamantez, Parent: I have four children that went through pre-K. They were foster children so they qualified for the pre-K program at Stewart. When I got them they didn't have a lot of boundaries, and they didn't have a lot of language development. So with the pre-K program, we were able to develop structure and developmental objectives and reach those little milestones like from counting, learning alphabet, it was just an incredible program. And they all became very strong readers

Edgar Bustillos, Parent: The difference I've seen since he started the pre-K program is that he's asking more academic questions versus irrelevant questions that didn't have an academic focus. He asks where the rain comes from, rain cycle, scientific process—things that for his age, really surprise me.

Britani Moses: We know that research tends to say that students who are considered economically disadvantaged, homeless, they have been under foster care, that often these students are not successful. Or they have lack of opportunities to allow them to be successful. But what we have seen here at Stewart is that students who participate in our program no matter their background or their economic standing, if they participate in our Pre-K program, they too can be successful.

Joy, Pre-K 4 Student: I'm Joy and I'm in Pre-K and I am 4. I'm learning my letters. My favorite thing at preK is make books and learn how to read. It's sheep book. **[she reads]** "Sheep are happy. Bah! Happy. Sheep are happy for their coats."