



AAUW Preschool

AAUW Preschool
2500 N. Northern Ave.
Waukegan, IL 60087
Tel: (847) 623-0550

Email: office@aauwpreschool.org

Website: aauwpreschool.org

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ANNUAL REPORT 2023



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

AAUW Preschool is proud to have been serving our community for 70 years and we are honored to be teaching the 2nd and 3rd generation of AAUW Preschool families.

As current director, I have had the privilege of serving our school for 25 years as a parent, volunteer, teacher, and director. Over these years we have incorporated researched-based changes while staying true to our mission of being a play-based preschool.

In this past year, we have continued addressing the COVID-19 challenges on family life. Our scholarship fund has provided assistance to families in financial need. Our caring teachers, safe classrooms, healing outdoor space, and vibrant programming have helped build stability for our families.

Our future challenges include upgrades to our aging building, competitive staff compensation, and expanding our diverse student community.

As we move forward we are focusing on "Learning Through Nature" using our enhanced nature curriculum and LearnScape area. Outdoor activities encourage children to take risks, to make mistakes, to be creative, to make friends, and to build resiliency and independence. Healthy children, healthy families, healthy communities.

Ann Atkins

WHO IS AAUW?

Our History

AAUW Nursery School was founded in 1953 by the American Association of University Women who realized a need for a quality preschool in the area. They formed a small, licensed, non-profit, parent-cooperative nursery school where young children could learn, grow, and thrive. As the school grew, we became independent of the founding organization, but retained our original name and purpose. Since 1970, we have been in a preschool designed facility in a quiet residential neighborhood on the northwest side of Waukegan. In 2013, AAUW Nursery School officially changed its name to AAUW Preschool.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide a comfortable, yet stimulating learning environment which values each child as an individual. We challenge each child to reach his or her potential by encouraging the development of social, emotional, intellectual, perceptual, language, and large and small motor skills.

Our Commitment to Equity

We are proud to serve a diverse population of children and families here at AAUW Preschool. AAUW Preschool staff and administration are committed to continued professional development in Implicit Bias training, to help identify ways that we can work better to strongly incorporate culturally responsive practices so that each and every child and their families feel and know they are welcome here.



WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

We are a Parent Cooperative Preschool

AAUW Preschool is a parent cooperative preschool, which means it is organized and administered by the parents. Every parent has opportunities during the year to help in the operation of the school. Through the cooperative efforts of parents and the staff we can accomplish all we wish for each child. Parents are free to visit the school at any time to observe or volunteer in the classrooms.

Families contributed 356.25 hours of service to AAUW Preschool during the 2022-2023 school year.



Outdoor LearnScape

About AAUW Preschool's LearnScape Initiative

AAUW Preschool's innovative LearnScape initiative is designed to foster young children's love for learning alongside a lifelong respect for nature. LearnScape includes the transformation of our traditional 1-acre playground space into an innovative nature-based outdoor classroom and creates opportunities for children to learn outside throughout their school day.

Area businesses, foundations, and individuals make LearnScape possible. Thanks to financial support and volunteer hours from people like you, exciting new elements have been added to the LearnScape outdoor classroom, including outdoor art easels, a mud kitchen, a cooperative water pump, construction rock quarry, outdoor music spaces, our featured climber, the "Eagles Nest," and our new Pathway to Adventure tricycle path. Thank you!

How does the LearnScape initiative foster learning?

At AAUW Preschool we believe the most vital classroom for children is the outdoors.

Although research shows the benefits of connecting children with nature, too often today's children and families have limited experience with the natural world. Through the LearnScape initiative, we seek to give children this essential experience. We have committed to creating an outdoor learning experience that fosters a love for learning alongside a lifelong respect for nature, people, and community.

Through the LearnScape initiative, area children learn outside throughout their school day through exploring science, and the arts in nature. LearnScape nurtures a sense of wonder, fosters opportunities to explore and celebrates discovery through:

- *Native plants and trees, gardening tools, a butterfly garden, and exploration zones* to observe insects and animal life creating opportunities for children to engage with and learn from nature.
- *Water pump, sluice and cooperative construction rock quarry* encouraging friendship-building skills through outdoor cooperative play.
- *Outdoor arts area and theater*—spaces for children work to create artwork with natural materials.
- *Dedicated "nature nooks"* for quiet time and book reading.
- *Inventor's workshop and mud kitchen* to encourage early math, science, and critical thinking skills.
- *Tricycle path, rock wall, sledding hill, and riding toys* for children's healthy physical development.
- *Sand pit, sensory path, and sensory garden* for sensory exploration.
- *Vegetable garden* to support healthy food choices and awareness of foods' origins.



MEET THE STAFF

Director – Ann Adkins

Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education
Teacher at AAUW since 1997
Director at AAUW since 2006
In Early Childhood Education since 1991
Parent of 3 AAUW Preschool Alumni

Assistant Director & Teacher – Nicole Gaa

Master's degree in Early Childhood Education, Leadership and Advocacy
Teacher and Assistant Director Since Fall 2022
In Early Childhood Education since 2017

Office Registrar – Emily Frievalt

Education in communication, public relations, business, and hospitality
At AAUW Preschool since Summer 2019

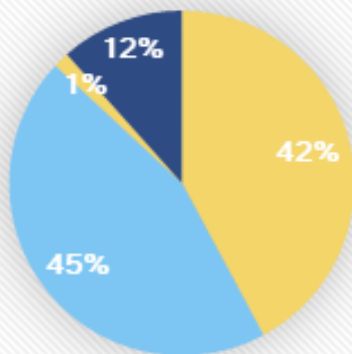
Teachers

Nicole Gaa – Pioneers and Explorers
Laura Swanson, former AAUW Preschool Student Teacher – Discovery
Idalia Garza, Alumni Parent – Odyssey
Karen Ashworth - Pioneers
Denise Romero, Alum & Alumni Parent – Scouts and Odyssey
Sandra Ramirez (Assistant/Aide) – Discovery, Voyagers, Explorers
Lilianna Abarca (Assistant) – Adventure, Voyagers
Jessica Castillo (Aide) – Discovery, Adventure, Voyagers
Natalie Ingrum (Aide), AAUW Preschool Parent – Odyssey, Pioneers
Meg Brown, Alumni Parent – Substitute Teacher

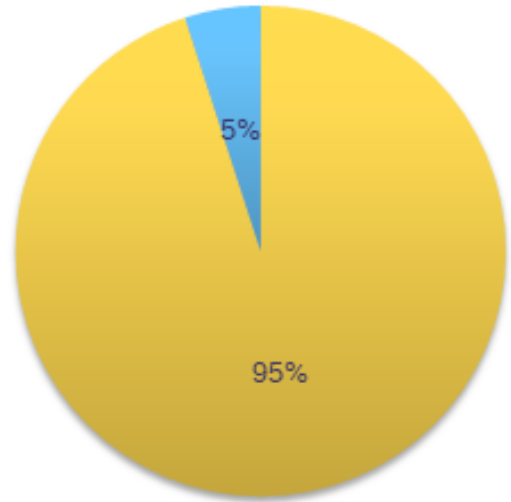


BY THE NUMBERS

Revenue by Source



Expenses by Category



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

125 children attended
9 children attended Scouts
31 children attended summer camps
40% of families received financial assistance

Reviews from our Families

We love AAUW Preschool! The staff and families' commitment to create a great learning experience that support children in all areas of development is exemplary. The outdoor learning initiative sets AAUW Preschool apart.

My child and all my children have benefited from the school. They have learned so much more than I could have ever imagined. Not only did they exceed the educational goals for my children. They also fostered imaginative thinking, problem solving skills, cause and effect, curiosity, exploration, social solutions. They helped lay an amazing foundation of skills that will forever stay with all my children. I can say this because I have a high school graduate going off to college who can still tell me amazing things she learned from attending this school. "It takes a village to raise a child" and AAUW is exactly that, a vital member of our family's village.

Thanks to the time, talent, and dollars of donors, parents, and community partners, AAUW Preschool organized and presented:

Our First Annual Fall Festival
Annual Spring Carnival
Positive Solutions for Families Workshop
Family Nights

OUR THANKS

Thanks to the support of our donors, AAUW Preschool provided **scholarships to 8 children** and built a **custom tricycle garage for the LearnScape**.

Grant Funders:

Early Childhood Block Grant – Preschool for All
Lake County Community Foundation

Accreditations and Licensures:

NAEYC
Illinois ExceleRate Gold
The Department of Child and Family Services

Board of Directors:

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