



Meet the Staff

2-Year-Old Staff

Mrs. Erickson, Lead Teacher (All 2-Year-Old Classes)

Angie attended the University of Illinois for undergrad and Loyola University for her master's degree in social work. Angie is a former outpatient child & family therapist. She took time off to stay home with her children, Aiden & Ashley, and has now been at the Lincoln Learning Center for 7 years. She lives in Downers Grove with her family and she loves seeing current and former students around town!

Mrs. Lillie, Teacher Aide (All 2-Year-Old Classes)

Mrs. Lillie has been teaching preschool at Lincoln Center since 2019. She attended Lewis University for undergrad. Mrs. Lillie taught preschool in Western Springs before taking time off to stay home with her 3 children. She lives in Westmont with her family and always has a smile and hug for her students!

Rec Center Staff

Mrs. Pedersen, Lead Teacher (TU/W/TH)

This is Melissa's third year with the Park District's preschool program. She was a Special Education Aide in District 58 for 7 years, working with students in 1st-8th grade. She also taught 5th-8th grade Social Studies for 2 years, as well as 3rd grade for 4 ½ years. She loves being outdoors, camping, and being with family. Melissa has lived in Downers Grove almost her entire life, but currently resides in Joliet with her husband and 2 girls.

Mrs. Walrath, Teacher Aide (TU/W/TH)

I am starting my 2nd year with the DG Park District. I taught preschool at the YMCA when my daughter was small; I then continued working in education as an Instructional Assistant for over 17 years in local public schools. In my free time I love being a grandma and traveling with my husband. I am excited to be working among young learners!

4/5-Year-Old Staff

Mrs. McGinnis, Lead Teacher (M/W/F)

Mrs. McGinnis joined the Lincoln Learning Center in 2015. She started her first four years as an aide in the 4/5-year-old classes. Before coming to the Lincoln Center, she taught Preschool/ Kindergarten Religious Education at St. Mary of Gostyn for 3 years. She also homeschooled her special needs son. Mrs. McGinnis enjoys cooking and camping during her free time. She resides in Downers Grove with her husband and 3 kids.

Mrs. Hickmann, Lead Teacher (M/W/F & TU/TH)

This is my second year at the Lincoln Learning Center. I have previously taught a wide range of grades in the Chicago Public School system. I have a Master's degree in Education with endorsements in reading and writing. Prior to teaching, I worked as a children's counselor. I have four active children and spend a great deal of time at their sporting events. In my free time, I enjoy reading and traveling.

Mrs. McGarry, Lead Teacher (TU/W/TH)

Mrs. McGarry has been working for the Park District since 2010 and joined the Lincoln Learning Center in 2018, working mostly with the 4/5 classes. She studied accounting in her hometown of Rome, Italy and embraced Early Childhood Education once she moved to the US. Her passions are cooking, reading and everything space exploration related! In her free time, she loves to travel - although her favorite place to be is at her home in Downers Grove, where she lives with her husband and their two kids since 2001.

Mrs. Justus, Lead Teacher (Monday Add-On)

Mrs. Justus has been working at the Lincoln Learning Center since 2017. She started as an aide for the 3s and 4s, and then moved to a Lead position for the 4s starting in 2018. Mrs. Justus lives in Downers Grove with her 3 children, who all attended Lincoln Learning Center preschool!

Mrs. Haley, Teacher Aide (M/W/F)

This is my second year at the Park District preschool. I have been a first grade, kindergarten and preschool teacher and worked at the Downers Grove Public Library. Prior to this I was a professional storyteller for 30 years; many children in the Chicagoland area knew me as Mother Goose! I am an avid reader and gardener. My husband and I have two daughters and six grandchildren.

Mrs. Kelley, Teacher Aide (TU/W/TH)

This is my second year at the Lincoln Learning Center. I taught the 3's age group for many years at Peter Pan Early learning center. I graduated from Bradley University in 2007 with a fashion merchandising degree but found out teaching young kids is more my passion! I am a mom of three boys and my princess dog. I love crafting in my spare time and run a small crafting business!

Mrs. Dietrich, Teacher Aide (M/W/F & TU/TH)

This is my second year working for the Downers Grove Park District. Prior to this, I taught Middle School LA/Lit for 10 years. My husband and I are high school sweethearts and have two boys, and just welcomed our last baby, a girl, last September! In my free time, I enjoy being outside with my family and cooking/baking.

3-Year-Old Staff

Mrs. Shirk, Lead Teacher (M/W & TU/TH)

Cara Shirk has been teaching at the Lincoln Center since 2015. She has worked as an aide and has been a lead teacher for about 8 years teaching in the 3s program. She has also been teaching the preschool add-on class called Ready, Set Kindergarten for the past several years. Cara has a Master's Degree in Elementary Education with a reading specialist endorsement from UIC. Previously, she taught 2nd grade and was a reading specialist in Berwyn. Cara lives in Downers Grove with her husband and 2 daughters. Her oldest daughter is junior at the University of Dayton (go Flyers!) and her youngest daughter is a sophomore at Downers Grove North HS (go Trojans!). In her free time, Cara enjoys traveling, reading, and spending time at her lake house in Michigan.

Mrs. Urbanski, Lead Teacher (TU/W/TH)

Mrs. Urbanski has been teaching preschool at the Park District since 2017. Prior to joining the Early Childhood team, she worked as a purchasing agent for an early childhood company. She lives in Downers Grove with her husband and her two daughters, who are graduates of Lincoln Learning Center!

Mrs. Sexton, Lead Teacher (TU/TH)

Beth Sexton has taught preschool at the Lincoln Center for 8 years. She took a short leave but is so incredibly happy to be back! She has an Elementary Education degree and taught third grade for 10 years before having her two sons; Caden, 19, is a sophomore at Bradley University and Brody, 16, is a junior at DGS. She lives in Downers Grove with her family and newest member, Bailey, a rescued 1/2 Sheppard 1/2 Corgi mix. She's a huge Chicago White Sox and Chicago Bears fan and enjoys baking, being outdoors and playing games with the fam.

Mrs. Gaber, Teacher Aide (TU/TH)

Mrs. Gaber has a background in education and has been at the Lincoln Center since 2019. She graduated from Indiana University with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary and Special Education and later received a Reading, Writing, Literacy Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania. Mrs. Gaber taught 5th-8th grade in both Philadelphia and more recently, Darien, but now early education and preschool has her heart! She loves traveling with her husband, two daughters, and dog, Mack.

Ms. Colleen (Ms. Kuper), Teacher Aide (M/W)

Colleen Kuper is a graduate of Downers Grove South High School who is currently attending College of DuPage. This is her first year working with the preschool and she is super excited to be a part of the team! Colleen was also a summer camp counselor with the Park District this summer, so she knows some of the incoming three-year-old students from Pee Wee Camp! After work you can find her hanging out with her family, especially her dog! Arts and crafts are one of her favorite parts of the learning experience with students!

Mrs. Agnes/Mrs. Aggie (Mrs. Piwowarczyk), Teacher Aide (TU/TH)

Agnes Piwowarczyk lives in Downers Grove with her husband and 3 boys. Her boys all attended Lincoln Learning Center Preschool, so it is a very familiar place to her! She graduated from Columbia College Chicago with a BFA and worked as a graphic designer before taking a break to stay home with her kids. She loves kids and making fun projects with them. This will be her first year as a Teacher's Aide at the Lincoln Center, and she is very excited to meet all the kiddos!

Miss Sandra (Mrs. Schafbuch), Teacher Aide (TU/W/TH)

I've been a stay at home mom for the last 11 years to two girls, Caitlyn & Cara, and am looking forward to working with littles again! I live in Downers Grove with my husband, girls, and two cats and am a Girl Scout Troop leader.

Additional Staff

Mrs. Marchewka, Discovery Classes

This is Darcey Marchewka's second year with the Park District. She teaches students in the Discovery Kids program. She became interested in teaching with the Park District after her own son, now 3, attended both Discovery programs. Previously she taught 4th grade for 15 years in a public school, and spent many summers helping K-5 students strengthen their literacy skills. She obtained her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from North Central College, and her Master's in Curriculum and Instruction from Concordia University. Darcey has numerous years and additional certification working with EL students. Darcey loves gardening, crafting, and spending time with her family. She lives in Downers Grove with her husband, son, and cat.

Mrs. Wood, Discovery Classes

Sheli Wood is joining the Lincoln Center Preschool this year. Originally a Michigan native, Sheli moved to Chicago where she received her bachelor's degree and met her husband. After college, she and her husband moved to Los Angeles where she had her daughter. After spending time in California and Oregon, she cozied into Downers Grove in 2016, and had her son in 2018 who finished preschool at the Lincoln Center last spring. She enjoys working in her native garden, adventuring with her two children, and loves swapping silly stories and memes with husband and mom friends.

Mrs. Fair, Science & Math

Barb attended Augustan College for her bachelor's degree in elementary education, English and music. She earned her master's degree in differentiated instruction from the University of St. Francis. For 19 years Barb taught 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade in Bellwood and Lemont. After taking time to raise her 2 boys, she joined the Lincoln Center staff teaching science and math enrichment classes. Besides watching students learn and grow, Barb enjoys boating, reading, volunteering and spending time with friends and family.

Miss Fides (Mrs. Faron), Roving Aide

Fides (Fee-des) genuinely enjoys learning together & connecting with Lincoln Learning Center students. Fides also works at the Downers Grove Public Library, and she loves seeing familiar faces in both settings! She feels it is absolutely true that "experience is the best teacher" and is very proud that one of her many first humble beginnings is with the Lincoln Learning Center.

Miss Jess (Ms. Pearson), Roving Aide

Miss Jess is a senior at North Central College studying Psychology and will be starting a doctorate program for Occupational Therapy in 2024. She joined the Lincoln Center last school year as a classroom floater and substitute and will continue to do so this year on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. She looks forward to a great school year!