



Meet the Staff

We could not run Lincoln Learning Center or our additional early childhood classes without our talented staff! Read on to learn more about the diverse backgrounds of the teachers your child might encounter during their time with us. In addition, you might see other Park District supervisors and support staff stepping in to help with Preschool from time to time, including Claire Kent (Recreation Supervisor of Active Adults and General Interest Programs), Amy Shearer (Recreation Supervisor, Gymnastics & Events), Samantha Donovan (Assistant Superintendent of Recreation) and Malik Carson (Recreation Program Coordinator).

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 6 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!

3-Year-Old Staff

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

Mrs. Urbanski has been teaching preschool at Lincoln Center 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 **since 2016** 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 and Brody. She lives in Downers Grove with her family and newest member, Bailey, a rescued Shepherd/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. Shirk, Lead Teacher (M/W & TU/TH)

Cara Shirk has been part of the Preschool team since 2015. She worked as an aide for a year before moving into a Lead role. She has also been teaching the preschool add-on class 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 attends the University of Dayton (go Flyers!) and her youngest daughter attends DG North HS (go Trojans!). In her free time, Cara enjoys traveling, reading, and spending time at her lake house in Michigan.

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. Kuper, Teacher Aide (M/W)

Colleen Kuper is a graduate of Downers Grove South High School who is currently attending College of DuPage. Colleen started at the Park District as a Pee Wee Summer Camp counselor in 2023, before joining the Lincoln Learning Center for the school year. 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. 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. Agnes began as a Teacher's Aide in 2023, and she has been enjoying this new journey!

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

Sandra Schafbuch joined the Park District's Preschool Program in 2023, and has been enjoying working with littles again! Prior, Sandra had been a stay-at-home-mom to two girls, Caitlyn & Cara. She lives in Downers Grove with her husband, girls, and two cats, and is a Girl Scout Troop leader.

4/5-Year-Old Staff

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

I started teaching at Lincoln Learning Center in 2022. 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. Pedersen, Lead Teacher (M/W/F)

Melissa started with the Park District's preschool program as an aide in 2021, before taking over the Lead position for the combined classroom at the Rec Center. She was also a Special Education Aide in District 58 for 7 years, working with students in 1st-8th grade, 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, including her 2 girls!

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

I joined the Lincoln Learning Center team in 2022. 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)

Prior to joining the Lincoln Learning Center in 2022, 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, in September 2022! In my free time, I enjoy being outside with my family and cooking/baking!

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

Shannon joined the Lincoln Learning Center in 2023. Prior, she had taken time off from the workforce to focus on raising her children. Shannon loves being involved in her community, and has taken on active roles in the PTA, Plainfield Soccer Association, and Premier West Gymnastics Team. As a parent and volunteer, she loves spending time with children.

Additional Support Staff

Ms. Pearson, Roving Aide

Jessica Pearson joined the Lincoln Learning Center in 2022. As a roving aide, she helps out in many of the classrooms - substituting or just lending an extra hand! This flexible schedule is perfect for her as she continues in her pursuit of a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree.

Mrs. Walrath, Roving Aide

Cheryl Walrath joined the DG Park District in 2022. She taught preschool at the YMCA when her daughter was small; she then continued working in education as an Instructional Assistant for over 17 years in local public schools. In her free time, she loves being a grandma and traveling with her husband. She is excited to be working among young learners!

Mrs. McGinnis, Roving Aide

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 taking over a Lead role for 4 years. Now she is enjoying the flexibility of being a Floating Aide! Before coming to the Lincoln Center, she taught Preschool/Kindergarten Religious Education at St. Mary of Gostyn for 3 years, and 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. Haley, Roving Aide

I started teaching with the Park District preschool in 2022. 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.

Early Childhood Enrichment Staff

Mrs. Marchewka, Discovery Classes

Darcey joined the Park District in 2022 after her own son 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 in Elementary Education from North Central College, and her Master's in Curriculum and Instruction from Concordia University. Darcey has numerous years & additional certification working with EL students. Darcey loves gardening, crafting, and spending time with her husband, son, and cat.

Mrs. Wood, Discovery Classes

Sheli joined the Preschool team in 2023. 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, who finished preschool at the Lincoln Center in 2023. She enjoys working in her native garden, adventuring with her children, and loves swapping silly stories and memes with her husband & friends.

Mrs. Fair, Science, Reading & Math

Barb Fair 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.