

# Quality standards prevail at Maria Early Learning Center

## Toledo, Ohio, USA



Maria Early Learning Center sponsored by the Toledo Province is a year-round facility for children six-weeks to five-years old and is one of very few Catholic Early Learning Centers in Ohio. The emphasis is on education, not on babysitting, and teachers model the values of Jesus.

Giving attention to a child's developmental milestones is what's important today, according to Sr.

Constance Marie Suchala. In her sixth year as Director at Maria, she says, "Because research has shown us that a person's greatest development and learning is from infant to age three we give attention to meeting developmental milestones. Lead teachers in each room create lesson plans for growth of the child. It's important to have visible evidence that growth is taking place."

"Ohio requires that teachers of young children have more education and that Early Learning and Development Standards for the children are met. Lee Nowak pre-kindergarten teacher says, "It seems like our teachers are here for the children, not just a paycheck. We all help each other, praise the children, and take more time with them. We have great parents and feel a real sense of community here."

Children at Maria begin praying before their meals as early as 12 months and Sr. Mary Krista Benda teaches religion to the four-year olds each week.

Marie Hornyak, parent of Max says, "Max is happy to be here and skips in every day! I could tell by the end of his first week that he was comfortable at Maria, which immediately put me at ease. His speech is amazing for a two-year old because they teach him so much." Parents are also pleased that Maria Early Learning Center



has a chef who makes sure the children are eating good food, according to Sr. Constance Marie.

Additionally, parents can access a software program called LifeCubby which is an online portfolio to record all aspects of a child's development and daily life. Teachers can note how much a child ate at a meal, their developmental progress and take a photo or record a video of a child's activity. Parents receive an instant "alert" email when a teacher publishes a new picture, video or documentation about their child.

"We even have out-of-town grandparents, some who live out of the country, who access LifeCubby to see their grandchildren grow and progress," added Sr. Constance Marie.

Maria Early Learning Center was established in 1990 and in 2010 it became a separately incorporated organization with a governing board. The Board is currently developing a strategic plan to insure the future of Maria Early Learning.