

Early Childhood Programs

Contact your child's school district to learn about obtaining a referral for LICA services.

What is an Early Childhood classroom like?

The LICA Early Childhood Program is for children ages 3 and 4 who are deaf or hard of hearing. To meet their unique needs, LICA has two early childhood classrooms housed at Forest Elementary School in Des Plaines. In the oral classroom, the children are led by an experienced, orally-trained teacher of the deaf and an assistant who is also an orally-trained teacher of the deaf. In the total communication classroom, the class is led by an experienced teacher of the deaf and assistants who use spoken English and sign language. Classes are small, usually between four and seven students.

Two days a week, the LICA students are joined by hearing students who serve as language models and communication partners. LICA students also participate in field trips and other school events with general education students.

What will my child learn?

LICA's philosophy is that young children learn best by doing. Through play-based activities and teacher-led lessons, our students explore, experiment, discover, solve problems, master skills, and build self-esteem in a warm, caring, and carefully structured environment. Ongoing assessment of each child's progress, using a variety of well-established tools, is built into the program.



LICA's Early Childhood Program focuses on the development of the whole child including the following areas:

- **Language:** To help children develop a broad range of communication and early literacy skills.
- **Social:** To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are a part of the group.
- **Emotional:** To help children experience pride and self-confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.
- **Cognitive:** To help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success, and by helping them learn to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings.
- **Physical:** To help children increase their large- and small-muscle skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do.

LICA's Early Childhood Program uses the Creative Curriculum®, Speech Perception Instructional Curriculum and Evaluation (SPICE)®, SRA Reading Mastery Curriculum®, and SRA Language for Learning Curriculum®, and is aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Standards and the best practices of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We teach language in themed units focused on the development of speech, listening, vocabulary, syntax, and language skills. Activities are modified to accommodate the individual needs of the child and address the goals in each child's Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

Who will teach my child?

LICA takes a team approach to teaching.

All LICA teachers maintain certification from the State of Illinois in special education/deaf education, with additional qualifications in early childhood education. They are knowledgeable about amplification, cochlear implants, and the impact of a hearing loss on language, speech, and academic development.

In addition to classroom teachers, students are supported by a speech-language pathologist, an educational audiologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, a social worker, and a psychologist. Our support staff hold graduate level degrees and state licensure in their fields. The educational team also includes a physical education teacher,

an instructional interventionist, a school nurse, a vision teacher, classroom teaching assistants, and the LICA Program Supervisor. The LICA Assistive Listening Device (ALD) Technician provides rapid-response support to classroom staff. Not all of the staff members listed work with every child; services are determined by the child's individual needs as listed in his or her IEP.

What part do parents play?

Parents play a vital role in their child's development. The team approach extends from the staff at school to the parents at home who work together to meet the child's individual needs and to help him or her succeed. Regularly scheduled meetings and close communication, including daily notes, are provided to parents.

***Interested in visiting? We'd love you to see us in action.
Please refer to the visit guidelines on our website
www.lica.k12.il.us***

A typical day in LICA's early childhood program includes:

- One-on-one language instruction with specific goals chosen for each individual child
- A craft or cooking activity emphasizing unit vocabulary as a group language lesson
- Individual speech practice with a certified speech-language pathologist
- Gym and library story time with regular education staff
- Structured and unstructured instruction and play

LICA (Low Incidence Cooperative Agreement) is a public school special education cooperative that serves 44 school districts in the north and north-west Chicago suburbs. LICA provides classroom instruction, itinerant support, diagnostic services, and related services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing from age 3 through 21.

Our mission

LICA's mission is to help students become successful adults in home, school, work and community by providing programs and services that ensure students: a) acquire and use knowledge and skills; b) develop effective communication skills; c) interact well with others and have friends; d) take effective action to meet their needs; e) care about others and contribute to society; and f) take actions to maintain their own health and wellness.