



ACHIEVEMENTS
LEARNING CENTER



ACHIEVEMENTS
Early Development Center

Staying Healthy from an Early Age

Written by F. Justin Ossmann

Are you concerned with your child's weight or amount of physical activity? According to healthykids.org, the number of overweight children and adolescents in the United States has more than doubled since 1970. 10% of children between the ages of 2 and 5 are overweight, and that number increases to 15% between the ages of 6 and 19. In a society where physical education classes are slowly eliminated from public school systems across the nation, these statistics are even more likely to increase. America's children are overweight, and the only way to alleviate this issue is to teach the children at a young age the importance of regular exercise and healthy nutritional habits.

Achievements Early Development and Learning Centers understand the importance of this. As a non-profit Florida Gold Seal educational institution, Achievements helps prepare children as young as 8 weeks for a successful future. One of the largest Florida Voluntary Pre-K providers in south Sarasota County, Achievements combines state-approved curriculums in math, science and literacy with playful interaction and hands-on activities, to prepare children for a successful kindergarten experience.

Interwoven with the Centers' academic and social development programs, is a strong focus on keeping children of all ages physically active. Recently, Achievements completed construction on a new indoor gymnasium, allowing children at the Centers to burn calories and have fun doing so. "This way, we can ensure that our kids are getting exercise each day, regardless of weather conditions," explains Tiffany. "It's also better for kids with allergies." The indoor gym includes a ball pit, soft climbers, a Little Tykes Play Tree, and more than enough stimulating activities to promote gross motor skills and an active learning experience.



Another new addition at Achievements is the FIELDturf synthetic lawn to the Center's newly expanded play area. Consisting of recycled rubber and other synthetic materials, FIELDturf looks and feels almost identical to real grass, but it is easier to maintain and doesn't require pesticides or other chemicals. Even with long periods of rain, the turf is able to drain faster than regular sod, making the playground accessible in the rainy season. "It is healthier for the children, and allows for more outside time year round," says Tiffany.

Growing Healthy Kids is another program utilized by Achievements in effort to promote physical activity and healthy eating. A Collaborative Nutrition Program for preschool children and their families, Growing Healthy Kids is a food and health-related curriculum that helps children learn how to eat healthy—and where healthy food comes from. In addition to the Growing Healthy Kids curriculum, Achievements has developed and implemented their own family style lunch program. "By providing the children with a family style lunch experience, our teachers are able to engage them in meaningful conversation, about food, its nutritional value and the importance of trying new things. Our children even learn about gardening, and care for their own small gardens. We want to teach our children to be healthy, but we also need them to learn to care for themselves."

Achievements is located at 2700 Bobcat Village Center Road, off Toledo Blade Boulevard in North Port. The Center is open Monday through Friday, 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM. Both part-time and full-time programs are available. For more information on enrolling a child into either the Center's preschool or Early Development Center, please call (941) 423-8844, (941) 429-9677, or visit www.achievementslearningcenter.org.