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FAITH NOTEBOOK

Pyramid Program: Young minds in gear

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The Lighthouse Academy at East Cobb United Methodist is the first preschool in the Southeast to have adopted a curriculum called the Pyramid Program, according to Debby Neubauer, branch manager for the U.S. division of Cito.

East Cobb is poised to be a demonstration site for other schools interested in learning more about the Netherlands-based curriculum. Cito is a testing and assessment company that develops educational programs worldwide.

The curriculum focuses on "more complex ways of thinking," "innovative four-step process" and "dynamic system theory." East Cobb's interim preschool director, Edwina Samuels, breaks it down into laymen's terms:

"The Pyramid Program provides balance between the power of the child to learn and develop on his own and the power of the teacher to optimize the learning experience," she said. "The program incorporates creative play, stimulates independent learning, cooperative project work, goal-oriented concepts and skill development."

Using building blocks, the children learn to be creative, independent thinkers. Skills in math, language, reading, writing and spatial relationships are honed. Teachers are trained to observe the children playing with the blocks, offering clues to the child's development level that can help with his or her education.

Samuels said the building blocks are cut and designed to foster creativity among the children. The "high-energy, high-interactive and high-impact" program helps children at both genius and developmentally delayed levels, according to Samuels.

The preschool staff is working to adapt those ideas to benefit the babies and 1-year-olds in the program. About 30 children are enrolled in classes for infants to 4-year-olds. Capacity is 60, and Samuels said she's adding students almost daily. Class ratio is one teacher for five children.

For more information, call Samuels at 770-971-3671 or click on the Lighthouse Academy link at www.eastcobbumc.org.