

# STARTING THE YEAR BRIGHT!

## IEGA JANUARY PRESCHOOL/ KINDER NEWSLETTER

HAPPY NEW YEARS & welcome to 2025 in the IEGA Preschool/Kinder Program! We're starting the new year off right with lots of energy, enthusiasm and plenty of gymnastics fun! This month, we will be focusing on setting new goals, exploring new skills and building confidence as we jump, tumble, and balance our way through January!



### GYMNASTICS SKILL DEVELOPMENT: SPATIAL AWARENESS

Every day we move through and interact with our surroundings. And, in order to accomplish this, spatial awareness is crucial. But what is spatial awareness? Spatial awareness refers to the ability to be aware of objects in space (the things in our environment) and your body's position in relation to them. Athletes are constantly moving their bodies through space, performing all kinds of movements that require precision, control and coordination. Spatial awareness helps them understand how to move in relation to their surroundings, whether that's tumbling across a spring floor, walking on a beam or dribbling a ball down a basketball court, while weaving around the other team.

In our preschool/kinder program, we intentionally incorporate activities that help develop spatial awareness:

- **Body Positioning Games:** Games like *Simon Says* or *Follow the Leader* help children practice moving their bodies in different directions - up, down, left, right, forward, and backward. And by adding specific instructions (e.g., touch the ground, jump up high, hop in the circle, skip to the right or spin around) we help children build an awareness of where their bodies are in relation to the space around them.
- **Directional Games:** We play games like *Red Light, Green Light* or set up obstacle courses to navigate, which help children understand spatial concepts and develop a sense of where they are relative to other people or objects.
- **Movement with Props:** Using props, whether during warm-up games or at stations, encourages children to focus on how their body moves in space, while also considering how the prop interacts with their movements. This helps with coordination, balance, and an understanding of spatial relationships between their body and objects.

As your child develops spatial awareness in gymnastics, they're also building skills that transfer to everyday life. Whether it's navigating a crowded room, following directions, or playing lots of other sports, a strong sense of spatial awareness will help boost their confidence, coordination and competence in many activities.

### SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:

#### **THREE BIG GYM RULES AT IEGA**

- Respect Your Gym
- Respect Your Coach
- Respect Your Friends

Respect is a fundamental value in any learning environment and our three big gym rules help us talk with our students about what respect looks like as we interact with each other during class each week.

- *When we are being respectful we listen to each other.*
- *When we are being respectful we take care of each other & the equipment we use in class for learning.*
- *When we are being respectful we support each other by taking turns, using kind words and encouraging & cheering each other on.*

By fostering a culture of respect in the gym, we help to shape how our students interact with others, approach challenges and grow both on and off the mat.

### FUN WAYS TO PRACTICE AT HOME:

Here are some fun & simple ways that you can support your child's spatial awareness development:

- **Have a Dance Party:** Put on some music & encourage your child to move - skipping, hopping or twirling around the room. Dancing is a great way to build coordination and spatial awareness.
- **Balance Practice:** Have your child practice balancing on a straight line, a low curb or a piece of tape on the floor. Try adding fun challenges, like balancing while holding a soft toy or walking with their eyes closed, with supervision of course.
- **Puzzles, playing Jenga and building with construction-type toys like blocks or Legos** all support spatial awareness development.

Your child's physical, emotional & social development are important to you and they are important to us too!