

Prekindergarten Handbook

Philosophy

The purpose of the Prekindergarten Program is to provide children and parents with an opportunity to grow and change in positive ways. Though the primary concern of the program is the child, we believe that in order to make long-term positive changes, it is necessary to involve the parents and to work to make long-term positive changes with the parents. Therefore, our goals and philosophy are aimed at serving the needs of the child and the parent.

Our program provides an environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of the three—five year old child. This in turn enables them to become independent, productive and contributing adult members of our society.

Our program also provides an environment that promotes parents to have a better understanding of the needs of children and enhances their parenting skills. This enables the parent to continue beyond the scope of our program encouraging the child and making a positive difference in promoting the child to achieve to their full potential. Workshops, parent-child playgroups, classes, field trips, and classroom visits will all provide opportunities for parents to learn and grow.

The Preschool for All program serves families who may potentially have difficulty in social, emotional, cognitive, and/or physical tasks when they enter school because one or more of these areas are developmentally delayed. While providing appropriate activities in all areas of growth, teachers provide children specific training and activities to strengthen needful areas. The emphasis is placed on individual needs as assessed through consistent monitoring.

This is a developmental program in which all activities are designed to foster growth that is developmentally appropriate for the preschool child. Children learn through play and other informal learning situations that are appropriate. A more natural environment is used where children can interact in small and large groups while teachers provide opportunities for them to learn.

Essential to a child's successful school experience is having a positive self-image. A child who feels capable and able to learn is likely to be a good achiever. Our teachers focus on self-esteem, encouraging the children to value themselves as capable and important. We believe that good discipline includes responding to inappropriate behavior in ways that help develop an understanding and acceptance of appropriate behavior while maintaining the child's sense of being valuable and capable. Positive discipline techniques are always used and at no time are children disciplined in negative ways.

Our program is a partnership of child, parents and teachers. We believe it is necessary for the parents and teachers to work together for the improvement and development of the child.

Welcome

We are happy to have your child enrolled in the Preschool for all class in District #100. All children who participate in this program are 3-5 years of age and come from all parts of Jersey County. Soon your child will be able to share with you all the many new activities he/she is involved in and the new friends he/she has met.

We will encourage your child to learn through play. Play is important and necessary for the preschool child. It encourages the child's development in the areas of language, cognitive, social and emotional, fine motor, creative and physical development. They will learn in play situations, informal situations, and formal situations.

Attendance

Preschool students attend regular classes Monday through Friday. The morning class hours are 8:25 to 11:15 and the afternoon class hours are 12:10 to 3:00. Families are expected to attend parental involvement activities as often as possible with their child. Attendance will be taken at each parental involvement activity, parent-child interaction activity, scheduled conference, scheduled student assessment meeting, and your scheduled home visit days.

We do important things everyday and hope your child will be at school to benefit from them. Unless your child is sick or there is another important reason such as a family emergency, we expect your child to be at school. Why is this so important even for such young children? Good habits begin early. If your child learns that attendance is expected in preschool, the pattern will continue as he or she grows older. You want your child to be successful in school and starting this routine is a great way to begin reaching that goal. It is your responsibility as a parent to see that your child attends regularly—and you will be happy with the results! They will learn more, have valuable time shared with classmates, learn not to make excuses when they have a responsibility, and become all around better students because they have begun a routine of good attendance. We look forward to seeing your child in school!

Delayed Start/Early Dismissal

During delayed start days there will be no morning preschool classes, but afternoon classes will run as scheduled.

If there is an early dismissal due to weather or emergency conditions, the afternoon classes may be cancelled. Our district website will have the latest updated information.

School Improvement Days

There will be no morning or afternoon classes on School Improvement Half-Day early dismissals.

Change of Clothing

We have some clothing at school for your child in case of an accident. Should your child use these, please wash and return so that it is available for the next child. If you prefer or the teacher suggests that you send clothing of your own, they will be left in the backpack so it is readily available and can be changed with the seasons.

Classroom Visit/Volunteer

Our program has an open door policy and encourages parent involvement within the classroom. As parents choose to spend the morning or afternoon in the prekindergarten classroom, you have two different types of classroom visit options. Depending on the option you choose, the parent and teacher expectations take on a slightly different role.

As a **parent visitor**, you may spend the day playing with your child and his/her friends. You will participate in the activities and centers with your child. You will spend free time together and engage in conversations enhancing the activity. This is an excellent opportunity to communicate, share excitement, and learn with your child. During each classroom visit, you will be encouraged to complete a "Kid Watcher" form.

As a **classroom volunteer**, you may volunteer in the classroom by helping an assigned group of students with an activity, helping the teacher prepare materials for future activities, or perhaps working with one child on a particular activity. Volunteering in the classroom allows you the opportunity to work with the teachers and students while observing your child play and interact with other students.

Both types of classroom interaction provide you with the opportunity to become involved with your child's academic life. You may visit the classroom at any time. If you know in advance that you plan to visit the classroom on a certain day, it is helpful, but not required, to let the teacher know when you will be coming. At that time, or when you arrive at school, please discuss with the teacher your

expectations for the visit. This will help you and the teacher make the most of your visit.

Communication

We will be sending notes home frequently in an effort to keep you informed. Please check your child's book bag/backpack daily. If you have questions, please call or stop by. We want you to know what is going on and we welcome your questions. Please communicate with us whenever you have the need. Please send all of your correspondence to school in the big, main pocket of your child's backpack.

District-wide Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held once per year in the fall. Parents of Preschool students who will be entering kindergarten in the fall will have an additional Parent-Teacher Conference in the spring.

Dress

Opportunities will be provided to work with paints, clay, glue, markers, etc., so please dress your child in washable play clothing each day. They feel comfortable to participate if they do not have to worry about staying clean. Outdoor play will be offered when weather is permitting, so please dress your child appropriately. For the safety of all children, tennis shoes are recommended.

Fees

There are no registration fees for our prekindergarten program. This program is funded by the Illinois State Board of Education and Jersey C.U.S.D. No. 100. Every child accepted into this program must qualify using State and District guidelines. Active parent participation is a requirement of our prekindergarten program.

Field Trips and Rules

Field Trips are a part of the early childhood curriculum. We will be going on various in-district field trips throughout the year. Some will be walking trips and others will be by bus. We require a signed permission slip from you for all field trips. If applicable, we may request a permission slip that will cover all walking field trips. A signed permission slip will be required for each individual bus trip.

No child may go on any field trips without a permission slip, so please return it promptly.

Permission slips for field trips on a bus will be sent home before each planned event. These **MUST** be filled out and returned in order for your child to go with us. If you would be willing to help on any of the field trips, please contact us. We always appreciate your help and involvement.

Rules:

1. While we include siblings in many of our Pre-K activities, field trips are designed to be specific learning activities for your Pre-K child with adult supervision.
2. Children need to stay with the group. No running. Hold hands or a rope so that all children will be kept together.
3. Adults watch and interact with those children assigned to their care.
4. Children listen to and follow the adults to which they are assigned.
5. Adults listen to the reactions of the children and answer any questions. Please talk to the children about what they are seeing, hearing, touching, etc.
6. Adults please remember: You are a role model for the children. Don't discuss "adult subjects" in front of them, and no smoking is allowed on field trips.

Health

Children entering Preschool for All must have an up-dated immunization record and a completed physical examination dated within one year of entering the program. Returning students do not need another physical unless they have health issues. These requirements must be completed or the children will be excluded from school.

Please keep your child at home when he/she has a temperature and/or is not feeling well. This protects your child as well as the other children. Your child should be free of fever for 24 hours before returning to school. Students should

not take medications during school hours unless necessary for their health and well-being. All medications must be discussed with the school nurse and be brought to the school by a responsible adult. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure medicine arrives safely.

Home Visits

Home visits are a component of our program. Every effort will be made to complete a home visit on students new to the Preschool. Home visits for returning students will be completed as time allows.

Three-year-old students will receive additional home visits as needed based on individual needs. New students entering the program after the school year begins will receive their first home visit prior to the student beginning school if possible, or as the teacher's evening schedule can accommodate.

Home visits will be scheduled as teacher's time allows. Evening visits are available for working parents who cannot be available during the daytime. The initial home visit will take about 30 minutes and the remaining visits will be scheduled individually and may take additional time depending on the needs of the child and the purpose of the visit. If necessary, you may discuss the length of the home visit with your child's teacher when the appointment is scheduled so that you allow ample time before planning the rest of your day. If you cannot make your appointment, you must notify the teacher as soon as possible to reschedule a time that will work for you. You will be notified of the home visit date and time by phone or by a note sent home with your child. Please check your child's backpack each day.

Parent Involvement

Parental involvement is a requirement of our preschool program. All parents must fulfill this obligation to keep their child eligible to participate in this program. This is required of everyone who participates and there are **no exceptions**. During the year there will be numerous opportunities to participate in Parenting Activities. We offer childcare during most of our parenting activities. Please check with your child's teacher when in doubt.

The following outlines the parenting components that must be completed during the current school year. Failure to complete these activities will make your child ineligible to continue participation in our preschool program.

- PARENTING CLASS and/or PARENT WORKSHOPS
- PARENT-CHILD PLAYGROUP ACTIVITY and/or CLASSROOM VISIT
- AT-HOME ACTIVITIES

We want you to come and visit the class, go with us on field trips, help with special projects, and most of all we want you to participate in many parenting activities beyond the required amount. However, your participation during classroom parties and on field trips is not a part of our required activities. They are optional activities and therefore do not count in place of the required activities, but are in addition to them. All of our parenting activities are geared to help parents with the overwhelming task of "parenting". Parenting is the job that is probably the most demanding yet the job for which we have the least training. While your children are growing and changing in positive ways we think these parent activities will help you to grow and change in positive ways, too. We hope you will attend as many activities as possible.

Parties

While siblings are included in many of our preschool and parenting activities, school parties are designed to include your preschool child only. Some parents may be needed to assist with school parties. If you are interested in volunteering, please check with your child's teacher prior to the first scheduled party.

We celebrate birthdays at school. You may send a healthy pre-packaged snack on this day if you wish. If your child has a summer birthday we will celebrate it during the month of May. Please check with the teacher for the specific celebration date.

We celebrate some holidays. Please let us know ahead of time if you wish to send a healthy snack. This will help us monitor so it does not get too overwhelming.

Speech/Language Program

Speech and Language services are a part of the preschool program. Students identified with Speech/Language delays are evaluated and provided with appropriate services to meet the needs of the individual student. Speech Therapists work closely with preschool teachers and parents to promote better speech/language skills.

The four areas that are evaluated are:

1. Articulation Skills -
What speech sounds can the child make?
2. Language Skills -
Receptive language - What words does the child understand?
Expressive language - What words does the child use?
Grammar Skills - How does the child form sentences?
(Pronouns, verbs, etc.)
3. Fluency Skills -
Does the child have smooth flowing speech?
4. Voice -
Does the child use his/her voice correctly?

Speech/Language services can be provided in the following ways:

Articulation Therapy, Fluency Therapy, and Voice Therapy -
Usually provided in small groups in the speech room by a therapist

Language Therapy -
Provided in small groups in the classroom and/or speech room by a therapist

Sign Language Services -
Baby signs are taught during whole group and small group instruction. This instruction allows all students the ability to communicate with their classmates through the use of sign language.

Snack Time

Our Preschool for All programs does not participate in the school breakfast/lunch programs. Students should eat breakfast or lunch before coming to school each day. A healthy snack is provided for your child each day at no cost to parents. Milk may be purchased at .30 cents per day (\$6.00 for a 20-day ticket). Parents must purchase a milk ticket if you want your child to have white milk during snack time. (Milk as a snack is not part of any Free/Reduced Meal plan). If you choose not to purchase a milk ticket, your child will be served water. Money (\$6.00) should be sent to school in a separate envelope, in the big, main pocket of backpack, clearly marked "milk money".

Supplies

Each child should have his/her own "standard size" backpack that is brought to school each day to transfer papers and other items to and from school. Please do not send miniature backpacks or stuffed animal backpacks as they do not hold the appropriate size papers.

School supplies are primarily furnished and funded through our preschool program; however, additional supplies may be requested as donations throughout the school year from your child's classroom teacher. Supply donation requests are strictly optional - and only if you are able to participate.

Transportation - Bus Riders

This Preschool for All program is not a "*mandatory*" program. It is an "*optional*" program and, therefore, the school district does NOT have to provide busing. Because the district is committed to the program, we have ELECTED to provide busing for the students and areas most in need. There are strict guidelines that must be followed if your child is eligible for bus service. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in loss of service.

1. There must be an **adult in sight** when the bus stops to drop the child off. Children who are three - five years old are too young to be left without supervision. Please watch for them so we will know that you are home waiting

for their arrival.

2. Children must be ready 15-20 minutes prior to the scheduled Pick Up and Drop Off times. When a bus must wait a few minutes on a child it makes parents further down the line wait and are become worried. Make arrangements to always have someone at your drop off point on time. If you are delayed, have someone else available to meet the bus.
3. The bus driver makes every effort to adhere to a bus schedule. This is difficult because some days all children ride and other days only a few children may ride. Therefore, you must be flexible and realize that Pick Up and Drop Off times may vary as much as 15-20 minutes and this is unavoidable.
4. There is **ONLY ONE** Pick Up point and **ONLY ONE** Drop Off point for each child. We **will not** take the child to different places on different days. Bus schedules must be consistent to avoid errors and confusion when a substitute bus driver is needed. If this becomes inconvenient for you, you will have to make your own transportation arrangements.
5. Speak to your child about the importance of sitting down, wearing their seat belt, and staying in their seat while riding the bus. There is an Aide on the bus to help the children with seat belts and to keep order on the bus.
6. If your child is not riding the bus to school, please call the transportation depot at the bus garage (618-498-9866). If your child is not riding the bus home please send a note in the big pocket of your child's backpack or call the school office.

Transportation – Car Riders

1. Parents bringing their children to school must be prompt. Children who are tardy have a difficult time in the activities that follow. Children should arrive **NO EARLIER** than class starts and should be brought to the designated area. The teacher may not be available before that time, so do **NOT** bring children earlier.
2. Parents picking up children must be prompt. Teachers have many responsibilities after the class ends and should not be expected to have to

wait for the parent to pick the child up. Please be thoughtful and courteous.

3. We will not release your child to a person who is not authorized to pick up the child. If someone is going to be meeting or picking up your child that you have not previously authorized, please inform us in writing.

Volunteers

An important part of our Preschool for All program is parent volunteers. If you are a parent or legal guardian, we welcome your willingness to volunteer in the classroom as well as at school. If you are not a parent or legal guardian but wish to volunteer on behalf of a relative or friend enrolled in preschool, we welcome your help, but will need a minimum one week notice before volunteering at the school or in the classroom. This should be requested by calling the school office or sending a note in the big pocket of the child's backpack stating your full name and the school activity in which you choose to volunteer.

**Thank you for helping us make this year in our Preschool
for All Program a positive experience for both you and
your child!**