

# Parent Handbook



Prince William Preschool Programs  
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## WELCOME

The Prince William Preschool Programs are comprehensive child development programs for preschoolers residing in the areas of Prince William County and Manassas Park.

Our goal is to offer a quality program for preschool children and their families that will emphasize education, health, social skills, and parent involvement. As a parent, you play a vital role in this effort. We will work as a team to provide opportunities for your child's growth and development.

We provide a stimulating environment and professional staff. We assist families in meeting their needs and the needs of their children through community resources. Your participation has a positive effect on your child's success in school. You can make a difference in your child's life and improve the quality of life for your family and yourself.

This handbook should answer many of your questions about this program. Try to keep it in a handy place so that you may refer to it during the school year.

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## ABSENCES AND TARDINESS

It is very important that your child attends school every day to get the greatest educational benefit from our program. **In the event your child is absent from school, parents are responsible for:**

- **Notifying the school office and Family Service Worker before 9:00 a.m. that your child will be absent and the reason why.**
- **Sending a note to school when your child returns, stating the reason for absence. *Written notes are required by the school division.***

**Doctor notes are required when:**

- **Children are absent 3 or more days in a row due to illness.**
- **Children who are absent due to surgery or hospitalization.**
- **Or, when children have poor attendance (missed 10 or more days during the school year), Doctor notes are then required for each absence.**

Children who have frequent absences (3 or more per month), have missed 10 unexcused absences during the year, or who have chronic tardiness **or late pickups** may be dropped from the program.

If, for any reason, your child will be late for school, please notify the school office. Tardiness and early releases are interruptions to the instructional program and are discouraged. Medical appointments and family emergencies do come up, and if we know of these, we can inform the teacher of the situation. (See Sick Policy)

Children who walk to school **must** be accompanied to the **classroom** by an adult, arrive promptly, and be picked up on time. **Teachers cannot care for your child before or after school.**

When children are absent, and the reasons are unknown, Family Service Workers may visit the home to ensure children are safe.

## ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES AT SCHOOL

If your child has an accident/injury at school which requires emergency medical treatment you will be notified by phone and/or injury report. Please be sure the teacher always has the most updated home and work phone numbers and addresses. You should have at least one additional person listed on your child's Emergency Card with their current phone number.

The school division has accident insurance for children. If your child receives an injury on school property and requires emergency medical treatment the child's medical insurance would be billed first. If the bill is more than what is covered by the insurance, Prince William County Schools medical insurance would also be billed. If you do not have medical insurance for your child, you would be responsible for paying the part of the bill that insurance did not pay.

# BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES

## *Meeting the Needs of All Children in the Classroom*

One of the program's goals is to create a safe, warm, caring and enriching learning environment for all children in the program. Some children in the classroom may need extra help to learn how to work and play with their classmates and teachers in a positive way. The program uses the following strategies to work with children who need some extra help:

During the daily routine, the teacher observes children.

- If children act inappropriately, the teachers give these children positive attention by commenting when they see positive behavior.

Example: "You picked up your coat, so your friends wouldn't trip. That was helpful."

"You used your inside voice."

"You and John are sharing blocks. That's a friendly way to play."

If a child becomes aggressively or consistently **unsafe** (hurting themselves or others):

- Child is removed from the situation as soon as possible.
- Teacher contacts the program administrative staff or building principal
- School Administration works with the teacher or teacher assistant to contact the parent/ guardian or other authorized person to **pick up the child immediately.**
- The child will return to school after a team meeting is scheduled with the parents and program staff and a plan to support the child is developed.
  1. The team lists strategies to help the child at home and at school.
  2. For the safety of the child and the class, the team may decide to decrease the school day or school week for the child.
  3. Parents will be encouraged to attend Conscious Discipline classes and use Loving Rituals at home.
  4. Upon returning to school, if the child becomes unsafe at any time, the parent or other authorized person must again pick up the child immediately. The plan will be reviewed and revised if necessary, by the parent and staff.
  5. Three or more repeated incidents of unsafe behavior will require a review by the Education/Disabilities Specialist and program Administrator to review the plan with the teacher and parents to determine if additional supports are necessary to ensure a student's success.
  6. If, after multiple attempts to support the child's behavior, improvement does not occur, then removal from the program is a possibility.

## BUS RULES

**For Pickup: Your child must be at the bus stop with an adult before the bus arrives.**

The bus driver will not wait if there is no one at the bus stop. Allow ten (10) minutes before and ten (10) minutes after the scheduled bus times to allow for traffic conditions.

**For Drop Off: There must be an authorized person waiting at the bus stop or your child will not be dropped off. Persons getting children off the bus must have a valid photo ID and must be listed on the Preschool Authorization Form.**

If not, your child will be returned to their **BASE SCHOOL** and you will be expected to pick your child up there within 45 minutes.

**Authorization Form:** Children are **ONLY** released by bus driver to those 12 years and older, listed on your child's Authorization Form. Drivers are required to view a VALID PHOTO ID every day to ensure the safety of children.

- **Keep contact and emergency information up to date** so that the school can reach you for bus delays or in cases of emergencies.
- **Additions to the Authorization Form must be made 24 hours in advance.**

Transportation is provided only for children in the school attendance area, one mile or more away from each school. Areas within one mile are considered walking distance.

**Children must follow bus rules, please explain the rules to your child. If your child does not follow the rules, you will be notified. If the behavior continues, you will be responsible for transporting your child to school.**

- a. Children must stay in their harness and remain seated.
- b. Children must keep their hands and feet to themselves.
- c. Children should not use foul language.
- d. Children must listen to the bus driver's/monitor's directions.
- e. Children may not bring food or toys in the bus.

*It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to inform the authorized persons (babysitters, relatives, day care, friends, etc.) of the School Bus Rules and Regulations.*

## CLOTHING

Be sure your child always has a clean change of clothing at school. We recommend you provide a zip lock bag of clothing to include a shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. Please label the bag with your child's name. If your child brings soiled clothing home, please wash them and return them to school promptly.

Children should wear comfortable wash-and-wear clothing to school. They will be playing on the playground and painting which may stain clothes. It is also recommended your child wears tennis shoes each day. Sandals, clogs, and flip flops are not safe while on the playground or in the classroom.

## CONCERN/COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

While it is hoped that open channels of communication and a cooperative attitude will provide a solution to most problems at the classroom level, some problems of policy, procedure or law may not be resolved. When a question of compliance with policy, procedure or law is felt to exist, a written concern/complaint may be filed on a form provided for that purpose. These forms are available from the preschool office.

A completed **PARENT CONCERN/COMPLAINT FORM** shall be submitted to the Supervisor. The Supervisor shall meet with the person filing the complaint within ten (10) working days after the complaint has been filed. Such persons may be accompanied by a representative, if desired, and shall be permitted to present evidence.

A decision resolving the complaint shall be provided to the person filing the complaint within ten (10) working days of the conclusion of the hearing.

The decision may be reviewed by the Policy Council Grievance Committee upon written request by the person filing the original complaint within ten (10) working days of the original decision. The person filing the complaint shall be advised of any proposed solutions, and if not accepted, a final appeal of the Grievance Committee's decision may be made to the full Policy Council within ten (10) working days prior to the next regularly scheduled Policy Council meeting.

### PARENT CONCERN/COMPLAINT FORM

PARENT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF CHILD \_\_\_\_\_  
CLASSROOM/CENTER \_\_\_\_\_

1. Nature of Concern/Complaint: Briefly describe incident or problem. Be specific and include relevant data. (If additional space is needed, use the back of this form).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. On what date(s) did you observe the incident, or on what date(s) did the problem occur?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you discuss the incident or problem with the classroom teacher or person involved?  
YES NO

If yes, please describe the response:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What could be done to resolve this issue?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you wish your concern/complaint to be kept confidential?  
YES NO

## CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE



Conscious Discipline is used as our guide for classroom management. Each child is part of the “school family.” Every day your child will have a job (table helper, kindness recorder, line leader, etc.). Children will learn how to take care of their own needs as well as how to care for others. Children practice deep breathing to calm down and regulate their feelings. They also learn how to solve problems through talking. Parents and staff are provided training throughout the year on the Conscious Discipline Program.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

One of the program’s primary goals is the education of your child. Children learn when they participate in experiences that help their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. The High Scope curriculum used is specifically designed for your children to develop these skills. It is very important that children **attend school every day on time** except when ill.

Teachers will provide you with ideas of activities that you can do at home to help your child gain the necessary skills for Kindergarten. Please read to your child every day.

Using the curriculum, teachers develop daily lesson plans that provide a variety of hands-on experiences. Lesson plans are posted weekly in each classroom.

*What do children learn in preschool?* If you look around a classroom you will see children playing in small groups, large groups, or one-on-one with another child or the teacher. **Play is children’s work.** It is how they learn to think, speak, and use their bodies. Children play in activities such as art, drama, block building, matching, sorting, writing, and reading.

Children’s skills are evaluated by observing them during learning activities. Children are assessed three times a year in math, cognition, physical development, approaches to learning, social/emotional development, and phonological awareness (writing their names, letter recognition, rhyming, letters sound); and once a year they are assessed for dual language needs. Information about assessments are shared during teacher/parent home visits and conferences.



Examples of materials and activities children use to build learning and development are:

EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS AND ACTIVITES	SKILLS
Puzzles, matching and memory games, shapes, and colors	Cognitive (Thinking Skills)
Storybooks, picture cards, flannel boards, talking with friends, dramatic play	Language
Tricycles, playground, apparatus, dance and exercise	Gross Motor (Large Muscles)
Lego blocks, scissors, crayons, beads, pegboards, puzzles, play dough, drawing	Fine Motor (Small Muscles)
Personal hygiene, family-style meals, practice with fasteners (zippers, snaps, buttons and shoelaces)	Self-Help
Group games play areas for blocks and trucks, dolls and dress-up clothes	Social Skills

## EMERGENCY CARDS

**Only people listed on the Emergency Card can pick up your child from school.** Any changes in authorized people require a **24-hour notice** to ensure all staff will have the most current information. When picking up your child at the school, office staff will ask to see a valid photo ID.

**All parents, including those with joint custody who do not live in the household, have the right to pick up their child, unless it is prohibited by a court order.**

**Report all changes.** When there is a change in your address, phone number or authorized person, please notify the teacher and/or your Family Service Worker as soon as possible. It is important that we have current and correct information in case of an emergency.



## EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

In case of an emergency, children may be moved from their school to an alternate shelter. For your child's specific school shelter please call the preschool office (703-791-8708), if an emergency arises. You also may receive text messages from Prince William County Schools regarding the incident.

## **FAMILY ASSISTANCE SERVICES**

The Family Service Workers (FSW) serve as a link between the family, the school, and the community. The FSW is an advocate and resource to ensure children have access to necessary services. Families are encouraged to contact their FSW with any questions or concerns. FSWs are responsible for assisting parents in completing the necessary forms and requirements for enrollment. FSWs review documents and assist families in keeping records up to date.

FSWs conduct home visits and conferences with each family during the school year. During visits, families have an opportunity to review family strengths and needs in a confidential manner. Families develop a Family Partnership Agreement, where FSWs assist with identifying family strengths, establishing goals, and setting a plan of action for themselves and their children. Each family receives a Community Resource Guide. Common referrals given are for food assistance, medical care, adult education, employment, housing, and childcare.

The FSW Team can communicate with families in both English and Spanish. For other languages, the school division will provide a translator.

Because of the confidentiality of children's and families' records, parents and volunteers are prohibited from reviewing any records other than those of their own children. Files are open only to staff and specialist/consultants on a "need to know" basis.

## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Parents are an important part of the preschool program. Research shows the more families are involved, the better children perform in school. There are many ways to be involved in preschool!

### **Do you want to learn how to help your child at home?**

- Visit the classroom and see the early childhood education program in action. Many activities in the classroom may be done at home with materials found around the house.
- Attend Conscious Discipline training, offered throughout the school year. Join other parents and learn about techniques that teacher uses in the classroom that you can use at home!

### **Do you want to share a skill with others or learn something new?**

- Share information about your family traditions or culture with the children in the classroom. Share your favorite collection, a skill or talent, or help the teacher with a class project.
- Attend some of the many trainings and meetings that are offered (nutrition classes, parent meetings, parenting classes, etc.).

### **Do you want to make your community better for all families?**

- Represent your child's classroom as a classroom officer on Policy Council, or any of the many committees that serve this program. Policy Council meets once per month. The committee is made up of parents and community representatives who make decisions about the program (how money is spent, program options, and discuss ways to improve the program).
- Get involved in the PTO at your child's school.

## FIELD TRIPS

When a field trip is scheduled, each child must have a signed permission slip prior to participating in the field trip. Children without a signed permission slip will not be allowed to participate. If your child is unable to participate or you do not want your child to go on the field trip, he/she **must stay home on that day**.

You are encouraged to attend the field trip with your child when space is available, **but we are unable to allow other children or siblings to attend the field trip if they are not enrolled in our program**.

## GIFTS

Our program does not allow teachers and staff to accept gifts or gratuities from anyone who receives services from the program. Teachers may not provide gifts to the children and exchanging gifts between children in the classroom is also not permitted. Thank you for your understanding.

## HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

**Healthy children attend school more often and are more likely to succeed in school.** To help your child stay healthy, the Preschool program requires the following:

**You are required to provide documentation of these to the preschool office:**

### **Physical Examination**

A complete physical examination is required on a "School Entrance Health Form". Exam includes hemoglobin/hematocrit, blood lead level, blood pressure, height and weight, immunizations and TB Screening. \*

### **Dental Examinations**

Initial dental exam for cleaning and fluoride treatment, routine and treatment follow-ups every six months.

\*Parents and volunteers are strongly encouraged to also have a TB Screening to safeguard their health and the children in our classrooms

**Screenings completed by the program:**

### **Developmental Screening**

Screening is completed within 45 days of enrollment. Referrals will be made to Child Find, as appropriate.

### **Speech, Hearing, and Vision Screening**

Screening is completed within 45 days of enrollment. Referrals will be made as appropriate for children who need further follow-up.

## MEDICAL TREATMENT PLANS

Any child with a diagnosed condition of asthma, food allergies, seizures, diabetes, or needing daily medication or treatment for a medical condition will be required to have a written statement from a licensed physician or licensed nurse practitioner. **It is required that all students with any of the above mentioned conditions provide the correct form to the school.** You may reach out to your Family Service Worker or Health Team to obtain any needed forms. **The signed form and medication must be brought to the school nurse before the child may start school.**



## MEDICATIONS

**It is the parent's responsibility to transport medication to and from school for the protection of all children. Under no circumstances will students be allowed to medicate themselves or be in possession of medication at school or on the bus.**

1. It is the intent of the School System to assist parent(s)/guardian(s), when they are unable to come to school, to administer medication, by giving medication to students so that the students may maintain school attendance.
2. Every effort shall be made by the parent/guardian for the student to receive needed medication outside of the school day. Prescription or over-the-counter drugs (cough medicine, Tylenol, inhalants, etc.) should be administered to students by parents/guardians outside of school hours except when prescribed by a doctor.
3. It is the parent'(s)/guardian'(s) responsibility to provide the following for prescription or non-prescription medication:
  - a. The parent'(s)/guardian'(s) written authorization for the school staff to medicate the child;
  - b. A written statement (pharmacy label will be acceptable) from the parent/guardian designating:
    - (1) the title of the prescription or non-prescription medicine
    - (2) the required dosage
    - (3) the time intervals
    - (4) the duration of administration;
  - c. Medication, which has not exceeded the expiration date;
  - d. Medication shall be in the original container.
4. If medication requires refrigeration parents should check with the school, before bringing in the medication, to see if refrigerated storage is available. Health Department rules do not permit the storage of medication in food service refrigerators.
5. The school will not be responsible for lost or spilled medications.
6. All medications to be administered at school shall be kept in a locked area. Only the person(s) designated by the school principal shall administer medication to students. Under no circumstances shall students be allowed to get their own medication from the locked area.
7. All notes from parent(s)/guardian(s), as well as physician's written orders, shall be kept on file at the school until the end of the school year.

## **SICK POLICY**

When your child is sick, please call the school and ask that the teachers be notified of your child's illness. Please send your child to school every day unless he/she has the following:

- Fever (100° or more taken by mouth)
- Diarrhea (2 loose stools in a row)
- Vomiting (with 24 hours of the time your child would leave for school)
- Nose Mucous changing from clear to green

**If your child has a fever, vomiting or diarrhea they will need to be symptom free without medication for 24 full hours before returning to school.**

The following usually require a visit/clearance from a physician: pink eye, strep throat, ringworm and impetigo.

**Be sure to ask your physician for a note for the child to return to school. The note should state:**

- 1~ Medical Problem**
- 2~ Treatment**
- 3~ Date Child Can Return to School**

**Please let staff know if your child is diagnosed with an illness not listed above.**

If your child has been out of school due to an illness requiring a hospital stay or your child has had surgery (including same day surgery) a doctor's note is required before they can return to school. The note should state the medical problem (hospitalization/surgery/illness), treatment, level of activity and date child may return to school.

The staff may discuss referring your child to a physician if there is a situation that isn't discussed above but may still be a health concern (such as an unusual rash).

Staff and volunteers will follow the same sick policy as stated above.

## **HOME VISITS**

Teachers complete home visits and conferences throughout the year. Depending on current guidance given by state and local officials, some visits may take place virtually. The teachers will visit with you before your child starts school to meet your child in an environment that is familiar to them. During the school year there are two additional conferences and one additional home visit to discuss your child's progress. The scheduled meetings will take place:

- November, Parent/Teacher conference at school
- January-February, Teacher home visit
- April, Parent/Teacher conference at school

The Family Service Worker will also schedule one or two home visits to discuss family goals and help with any concerns. Family Service Worker home visits are scheduled during July - November, December-February, or as needed based on family situations.

Please try to keep all appointments or give 24 hour-notice to reschedule visits.

## MANDATED REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Virginia Law 63.1-248.3 states that, "...any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school...who has reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, shall report the matter immediately" [to the local Department of Welfare]. Virginia Law 63.1-248.3 further states, "...failure to do so shall result in a fine."

School Board Regulation 771-1 states that abuse or neglect may be suspected if the parent or person responsible for the child has

1. Attempted, or threatened, to kill the child;
  2. Inflicted, or threatened to inflict, a serious bodily injury;
  3. Deprived the child of proper medical care or of the necessities of life;
  4. Abandoned the child;
  5. Committed, or allowed to be committed, sexual acts on the child;
  6. Emotionally abused the child.
- If your child gets any bruises, scratches, or burns at home from playing, or an accident, please report this to the classroom teacher immediately

Review your child supervision guidelines to make sure that your child is always under appropriate supervision.

If you suspect a child has been abused or neglected, you may also contact the **Virginia Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-552-7096**. Reports are taken 24 hours per day and may be left anonymously.

### Child Supervision Guidelines

Age	Time Limit
0-8 years	May not be left unsupervised
9-11 years	No more than 1.2 hours alone- days only
12-15 years	May be left alone all day
16-17 years	May be left alone all night or over the weekend

### Babysitting Guidelines

Age	Time Limit
12-13 years	May babysit children for up to 4 hours
14-15 years	May babysit over 4 hours/ not overnight/ not weekends
16-17 years	May babysit children overnight or over weekend

Before being left alone, children need to be trained in self-care techniques such as knowledge of how to deal with: emergencies, conflicts with friends/siblings, handling loneliness/boredom, personal safety, simple first aid, and fear. They need to know how to reach a responsible adult if needed. The Department of Social Services assesses each situation, individually.

## NUTRITION/SCHOOL MEALS



### BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

Children receive meals at school. Menus are selected by the Nutritionist and are provided free of charge for children. Foods are selected from the master menus that are low in sugar, salt, and fat. **Menus are nut and pork free.** To ensure the safety of all children in the classroom, **no foods or beverages are allowed to be brought into the classroom to share with others.** This includes treats for birthdays or holidays. Please do NOT send in snack items, as the preschool schedule does not include snack time.

**No outside food is allowed in the classroom for student meals.**

Individual menus are written when a child has food allergies or a specific medical condition. A Food Allergy Action Plan must be completed by the doctor **at least 5 days PRIOR** to starting school. Necessary medications need to be given to the school nurse as well. This helps ensure the appropriate staff have the information necessary to keep children safe and healthy.

Children eat meals in the classroom “family style.” Meals are served in large serving bowls and children, with the direction of teachers, learn how to set the table, serve themselves, and clean up. This helps children develop social skills and manners. All children are encouraged to try the foods offered; however, they are never forced to eat. New foods are introduced through menu selections by the Nutritionist or “Fresh Fruit and Vegetable” options provided by local farmers.

Parents are encouraged to come to school to eat with their child. Parent meals are not provided by the program. Parents may bring in a healthy meal prepared at home or they may purchase a meal from the cafeteria and carry it to the classroom. Parents must check with the teachers for any food allergens not allowed in their classroom prior to bringing in food. (No one may bring in food from restaurants because ingredients cannot be verified.)

Healthy nutrition is important for children’s brain and physical development. All children’s growth patterns, heights, and weights are assessed by the Nutritionist. Healthy eating classes for parents are offered during the year as well. If you have any questions regarding your child’s growth or eating habits, please contact the Nutritionist.

### TOOTH BRUSHING

Children brush their teeth after their first meal each day. It’s a small group activity with the teachers because children under the age of 8 need adult supervision while brushing their teeth. The children learn to brush all areas of their teeth and tongue as demonstrated by the teachers. Toothbrushes are sanitized daily and replaced periodically during the year.

## SCHOOL CLOSINGS

If school is closed or delayed for any reason (inclement weather), follow the procedure for **your school district**. Listen to your local T.V. or radio station or check the school website or APP for details. You may sign up for text messages or alerts. Please see your school office for more details.

Please note that when there is a 2-hour delay, morning half day classes will come to school 2 hours later than normal and will be sent home 1 hour later than normal. The afternoon half day classes will come to school 1 hour later than normal and will be sent home on time. Full day classes will come to school two hours later than normal and will be sent home on time.

During an early dismissal, there will be no afternoon classes held.



## SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The only item your child needs for school is a backpack. Our program supplies all other materials. Please make sure that your child brings the backpack to school each day.

Your child's teacher will send information home in the backpack so **please check it daily**. You may send notes to your child's teacher in the backpack. Please return all forms sent home promptly making sure that they are signed and filled out completely.

**Please do not send any food, candy, or drinks from home in the back pack. Toys from home should not be brought to school to avoid damage or loss.**



## **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

Program staff members are available to help families receive mental health services. The Mental Health Specialists:

- Observe children's social emotional development in the classroom.
- Use Conscious Discipline interventions to help children manage their behavior and emotions.
- Offer parents free workshops on Conscious Discipline interventions so they too can assist their children in identifying emotions, building up positive relationships with peers and adults, and developing healthy coping skills to replace unwanted behaviors such as biting, hitting, or yelling.
- Provide home visits and referral services, such as counseling, support groups, and community resources, to families via phone, email, zoom, and in-person meetings at the central office or school locations to help meet their needs.

In the classroom, the program uses the Second Step and Conscious Discipline curriculums to teach children how to identify and express their feelings in a safe manner. These interventions equip children to self-regulate and make safe choices.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Preschool screenings are conducted every year in the areas of DEVELOPMENT, HEARING, SPEECH, AND VISION.

If the results indicate a concern, your child's teacher will contact you to discuss their concerns and indicate whether or not they believe a referral for further testing and diagnosis is necessary. The results will be shared with you during a meeting and recommendations will be made for corrective treatment and/or individualized education plans. If you have a concern regarding your child's development, or if you suspect your child has a delay, contact your child's teacher.

At least ten percent (10%) of available enrollment is reserved for children with disabilities.

There is a Parent Resource Center that provides support, training, and information to parents and teachers of children with special needs. It is located at the Kelly Leadership Center.

# VOLUNTEERING



Parents are encouraged to volunteer and visit the classroom. Please see the back of the parent handbook for rules and regulations related to volunteering at school.

**Volunteers are required to provide proof of the following to the Preschool Office and sign the Volunteer Responsibility form prior to volunteering:**

- Negative TB test or screening (given within the last year)
- Valid COVID vaccine

Parents may eat meals with their child in the classroom, however parent meals are not provided by the program. Parents may bring in a healthy meal prepared at home (no restaurant or fast food) or they may purchase a meal from the cafeteria and carry it to the classroom. Parents must check with the teachers for any food allergens not allowed in their classroom prior to bringing in food.

**Unfortunately, when you are volunteering, you are unable to bring other children to the classroom unless it is a parent meeting.**

All parents and school visitors must sign in at the school office upon each visit and provide a photo ID. We also ask that you sign in at the classroom Parent Bulletin board as well so that we have record of your help in the classroom.

- **Information based on your contact with children, staff, and others at school is considered confidential and may not be used in conversation at school or outside school.**
- **Pictures or videos of children other than your own are prohibited while volunteering.**
- **All school buildings are smoke and drug free environments.**
- **Please do not use your cell phones while in the classroom or on field trips.**

# Volunteer Handbook

## Welcome

Dear Families,

We are glad to know that you have volunteered to help in your child's classroom.

Research shows that when parents and families are involved in their children's schools, the children do better and have better feelings about going to school. Also, parents who participate in their children's classroom are better prepared to support their child's school success. Your support and engagement make the program strong. Every hour you spend working in the classroom and volunteering your services has a cash value to the preschool program.

Our grantee, the Prince William County Public School System, receives federal and state funds to provide a preschool program for low-income families in the Prince William area. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the money received from federal tax dollars must be matched by donations of goods, services, facilities, and volunteer hours—so your volunteer hours count!

This booklet has information on how and where you can help when volunteering in your child's classroom. It offers guidance on how to talk to the students in your child's classroom and how to assist in the classroom. Please talk to your classroom teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

We hope this booklet will help make your time in the classroom successful.



## **THE VOLUNTEER'S ROLE**

The primary goal of the volunteer program is to provide opportunities for enhancing the growth of the volunteer and the child.

Volunteers are a very important part of our program, and families have several opportunities to help by working in the classroom, completing weekly Curriculum Connections, serving on parent committees, or on our Policy Council.

Community volunteers are welcome too and may come from many human service agencies, colleges, nursing schools, and other organizations.

## **TALKING WITH CHILDREN**



When talking to the students, it is important to state things in a positive way. This helps the child know what you would like him or her to do rather than focusing on the negative.

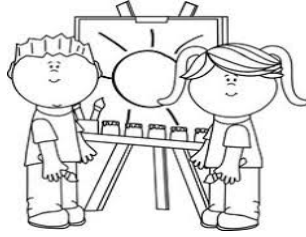
Here are some examples:

- “Please use your walking feet” instead of “Don’t run.”
- “Please use your inside voice” instead of “Don’t yell.”

## **CLASSROOM LEARNING CENTERS**

A learning center is typically a designated area within the classroom that provides students with exciting and interesting experiences to practice, enrich, and enhance their learning. These types of centers are filled with manipulatives, art materials, books, and other instructional tools. Here are some specific areas, in which volunteers may be asked to help. Try to spend some time in each different area.

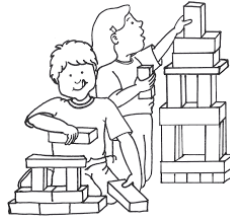
## ART CENTER



Art can include painting using crayons or watercolors, using playdough, gluing, cutting, or writing, just to name a few. To help a child begin a project: Say "What would you like to do?" Make sure the children's names are on the projects.

Accept whatever a child does on his or her own. Remember everyone has a different idea about how things should "look." You can say things like: "Tell me about your picture" or "You used lots of red in your painting." "Do you like red?"

## BLOCK CENTER



Block play encourages many skills.

**Language skills:** Try asking "How big is your tower?" "Where is the long block?" or "How did you build that?"

**Early math skills:** "Will it take five blocks or three blocks to fill up the truck?" or "Which tower has more blocks?"

**Problem solving skills:** "Will this block balance on the smaller blocks?"

## BOOK CENTER



You may read to a child or a group of children. Let the child select a book. Make sure you and the children are comfortable. Make sure all children can see the pictures. Show the children how to properly use books by your manner of handling and turning pages. Read with feeling! Children love this.

The book center doesn't have to be quiet. Encourage talking about the pictures in the book or as questions about the book.

## DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER



In this area children “pretend.” Here are some things they learn:

**Cooperation:** How to share with friends.

**Life skills:** How to be a mommy or daddy. How to clean a house. How to answer the phone. This area may be a doctor’s office, shoe store, grocery store, etc.

This is a “busy” area. Children love to have you join in their play.

## OUTSIDE TIME



Children use large muscles during outside time. Help children observe safety rules.

Regulate the flow of tricycles and avoid bumping into each other.

Help children share toys and take turns. Closely supervise activities on the slide and climber. Join in organized games.

## SAND/WATER TABLE



This area encourages children to experiment with pouring and measuring liquids and solids. Work with children to identify shapes and textures. Ask “How does that feel?” Talk to the children about what they are doing. Ask “Will that water in the small bucket fill the larger bucket?”. Help the children interact and use language. Ask “I see you stirring. Tell me about what you’re making?”

## SCIENCE CENTER



Here children learn how things work, move, feel, stick together. They learn about different kinds of animals and how things grow. You might see leaves, books, sticks, animals, fish, magnets, scales, thermometers, binoculars, and musical instruments. You may work with a group or with one child. Help children explore how things work, how much things weigh, and how long things are.

## FAMILY STYLE MEALS

Read the menu(s) posted in the classroom. **Some classrooms have menus posted for children with specific dietary needs (food allergies or religious preferences). It's critical that these children only get the foods listed on their menu!**

Tables and countertops are sprayed and wiped clean before children eat. You may help with this, ask the Teacher Assistant where the cleaning supplies are located. You may also assist with:

- Monitor children's hand washing before meals.
- Place all foods in serving bowls or on serving plates for each table. *(Adults must wash hands and put on plastic gloves before putting food into serving bowls and on serving plates).*
- Assist the classroom helpers (children will be assigned to help put the plates, eating utensils, straws, and napkins on the tables).
- Eat with the children. Remember that children are encouraged, but not forced to eat and drink. (Parent meals are not provided by the program. Parents may bring in a healthy meal prepared at home or they may purchase a meal from the cafeteria and carry it to the classroom. Parents must check with the teachers for any food allergens not allowed in their classroom prior to bringing in food.)
- Children clean up after mealtime. Assist teacher and teacher assistant as needed.
- Return food cart to the cafeteria.
- Spray and wipe the tables again and sweep around tables.
- Cover the garbage can with a lid or tie the bag closed.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Volunteers are required to provide proof of the following to the Preschool Office prior to volunteering:**

- Negative TB test or screening (given within the last year)
- Valid COVID vaccine

Medical Emergency Procedures are posted on the health bulletin board. The location of the classroom phone, emergency phone numbers, and Classroom Evacuation Route is posted by the exit door.

## PERSONAL HYGIENE

### BRUSHING TEETH:

- Help each child identify his/her toothbrush.
- Provide a cup of water and a dot of toothpaste on the side of the cup for each child.
- Encourage good brushing habits. Count to 20 while children brush.

### TOILETING:

- Encourage children to do as much for themselves as they can.
- Remind children to flush the toilet and to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Regulate the water temperature for washing hands.

### HAND WASHING PROCEDURES:

1. Wet hands in warm water
2. Use soap
3. Lather and scrub (for length of Happy Birthday song)
4. Rinse well
5. Dry hands





## RECORDING CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER HOURS

When volunteering in the classroom, please remember to sign into the school office **and** the Parent Volunteer Sign-In sheet in the classroom. On this sheet, please:

1. Write the date
2. Sign your name
3. Write down the time you arrive and the time you leave

### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Talk with your children before coming to the classroom to prepare them that you will be in class to work with **all** the children. Sometimes your child is excited because you are there, may misbehave, or cry. Although it is difficult, you should ignore the behavior, do not scold and be calm. Allow the teacher to handle the situation. We promise the more you volunteer, the better your child will adjust. He or she will be more comfortable each time you visit. (Children are proud when someone from their family comes to the classroom). **Only enrolled children are allowed in the classroom. Siblings must be left at home when you are volunteering.**
- Discipline is the responsibility of the teacher unless you are asked to assist or there is an emergency. The teacher knows the children and the routine of the classroom. Ignore minor situations. Children often act up simply to get attention. Children should never be struck, shoved, or jerked as a form of discipline.
- A child's classroom behavior is private information and should never be discussed with other parents.
- Remember our preschool programs include children with disabilities and you will not always know who they are.... Please respect each child's individuality.
- Children should be encouraged but never forced to eat. Children should never be denied food as a form of discipline.
- Always use a quiet voice when speaking to the children because they will copy your behavior.
- Smoking or vaping is not allowed on school property or in the presence of children on school related trips.
- Please do not use your cell phone while in the classroom or take videos or pictures of any child.
- Your volunteer experience can prepare you for related jobs in the community (such as teacher's aide, substitute teacher or cafeteria worker).