

Preschool Parent Handbook

2020–2021

Ages 3–5



PLAY LEARN AND GROW...
TOGETHER!



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Contents

2	Welcome	7	Classroom Visitors
2	Child Records and Registration	7	School Schedule
3	Our Staff	7	General Hours
3	Curriculum and Philosophy	7	Student Health
3	Participation Skills	7	Inclement Weather Schedule
4	Inclusion	7	Health & Safety
4	Daily Schedule and Daily Curriculum	8	Medication
5	Program Hours	8	Over the Counter Medication (OTC)
5	Payment and Refund Information	8	Policy for over-the-counter skin products
5	General Program Policies	9	Preschool Calendar 2020–2021
5	Transportation and Field Trip Policy	9	Behavior Management
5	Food Policy	9	Forbidden Staff Actions
5	Communication	10	Suspected Child Abuse
5	Contacting Staff	10	Discipline Policies and Procedures
5	Emergencies	10	Program Suspension and Dismissal Policy
6	Lines of Authority	11	Preschool Code of Conduct
6	Student Arrivals and Departures		
6	What to bring/send with your child		
6	Late Pick Up Fees		



We Thank You for Choosing a Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Preschool Program

Our state-licensed Preschool prides itself on providing a quality program that emphasizes learning through play, in a safe and nurturing environment. Our Preschool provides thoughtfully planned experiences and opportunities, which stimulate learning in all developmental areas: social, emotional, physical, and cognitive.

We provide a balanced program that includes choice and structured activities, whole group, small group and individual activities, and teacher and child-directed experiences. Our classroom environments are designed to encourage exploration and interaction with other children, teachers, and learning materials. Our curriculum is centered on dramatic play, blocks, art, sensory, science, math, music, movement, language and literature experiences. We seek to instill a lifelong love of learning!

All preschool staff are highly trained and meet or exceed State Licensing requirements pertaining to education, experience, safety certifications as well as background checks.

In this handbook you will find the necessary

information and forms pertaining to our Preschool policies and procedures. Please take time to review this information and if you have any questions, please feel free to contact your Preschool Manager.

Child Records and Registration

Beginning in March 2019, the Prince William County Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (DPRT) will utilize an online system to maintain medical, emergency and participant information for all Preschool programs.

ePACT is a system that is designed to create efficiencies for both customers and staff in maintaining confidential information in a secure and safe manner. ePACT maintains the same levels of security as online banking, and limits access only to the administrators who have been assigned privileges.

Through ePACT, you will be able to create your own accounts, upload and complete the required forms giving DPRT the necessary information for your child(ren). You will continue to have easy access to this system to update your account as needed.

For our administrators, this system will allow quick access to pertinent participant information, decrease the need for paper copies making our programs more “green” and give administrators a variety of ways to communicate with you regarding program updates, alerts and requests for information.

During the initial registration process, you will complete a child information form, giving basic contact information along with the program you would like to register for. After registering for your desired program, you will be sent a link to access the ePACT system. Through this link you will be able to upload and complete forms including necessary medical information, emergency contacts and any special needs your child may have.

In order for your program registration to be considered complete and for your child to participate, you will need to:

- Complete your child information form at the time of registration
- Pay required program fees
- Create an account with e-PACT
- Complete and/or upload the necessary forms associated with the program you registered for
- Provide the original copy of our child's birth certificate to the site you are attending preschool, a staff member will need to validate information
- Continue to make changes, as needed, to your family's account

Our Staff

We are committed to providing your child a safe environment and classrooms that are managed by caring and experienced preschool staff.

We hire those with a passion for children and learning! In addition to the experience they bring, our staff meets and/or exceeds all the training and certification require-

ments set by the Department of Social Services. Year round training for our staff includes behavior management, customer service, curriculum planning, inclusion, risk management, and child development.

In addition to this training, staff are also required to be certified in CPR, First Aid and AED. They must pass a criminal background and Central Registry Check as well as attend sexual harassment, bloodborne pathogen and daily health trainings.

“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”

Fred Rogers

Curriculum and Philosophy

The PWC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism aims to provide the best overall Preschool program possible. The Preschool program is designed to provide exciting group experiences for children ages 3 to 5 in a positive and safe environment. We believe that play is a child's primary vehicle to learning and that young children respond well to small group and individual activities. Therefore, our play-oriented activities offer choices and freedom of expression. Letters, numbers, colors and shapes are incorporated with daily creative art, music and movement.

Our Preschool program provides opportunities for your child to develop a positive self-concept; to stimulate creativity; to encourage curiosity; to promote physical development; to enhance communication skills and to develop basic learning skills. Preschool is a subsidiary of the Prince William County Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism and therefore has no religious affiliation.

Participation Skills

Children enrolled in the PWC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Preschool must

be the program age by September 30, 2020.

Potty training **is required** in our 3–5 year old classes.

Prior to enrollment, it is necessary for your child to meet the following participation skills:

- Have the ability to participate in an environment with an age-specific staff to child ratio.
- Be able to make the transition from leaving parent within one month.
- Be able to participate for the duration of the class.
- Have the ability to follow simple/single instructions.
- Is able to eat and dress independently.
- Respect others and their property.

Inclusion

Prince William County Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism programs are inclusion based activities. We make every effort to work with families to mainstream children with special needs into any of our programs.

Based upon the request and/or type of modification being requested, participation in a program may be dependent on such things as scheduling and/or contracting specialized staff, which could impact days/times of program. Therefore, in order to create a successful and enjoyable environment for your child, it is preferred that your request be received at least 21 days prior to the start of the program.

You can find more inclusion information and forms online at www.pwcparks.org

Daily Schedule

This is a sample schedule and is subject to change and will vary due to school start/end times.

3-K AM			
9:00 – 9:30	Exploration		
9:30 – 10:00	Circle Time		
10:00 – 10:15	Gym / Music & Movement		
10:15 – 11:00	Activities & Craft		
11:00 – 11:15	Snack Time		
11:15 -11:40	Outside / Music & Movement		
11:40 -12:00	Story Time & Goodbye		
4Pre-K AM		Pre-K & 3-K PM	
9:00 – 9:30	Arrival / Exploration / Manipulatives	12:30 – 1:00	Arrival / Exploration / Manipulatives
9:30 – 10:00	Gym / Music and Movement	1:00 – 1:15	Circle Time with Music & Movement
10:00 – 10:15	Circle Time	1:15 – 2:00	Activities / Crafts
10:15 – 11:00	Activities / Crafts	2:00 – 2:15	Snack Time
11:00 – 11:15	Snack Time	2:15 – 2:45	Outside Play / Gym
11:15 -11:40	Outside Play / Music & Movement	2:45 – 3:00	Story Time & Goodbye
11:40 -12:00	Story Time & Goodbye		

Program Hours

All of the Department Parks, Recreation & Tourism Preschool programs are partial day programs. There are no full day options. Each preschool site offers a menu of programs with varied days/times. (For specific information regarding Daily Schedules and Curriculum, Holidays, Teacher Workdays, Half-Days, and Inclement Weather please see related sections).

Payment and Refund Information:

Tuition for our preschool programs is due the first of every month and can be paid at the Front Desk or online.

A late fee of \$15 fee will automatically be added to your account if payment is not received by the first of the month. Unpaid space will be made available to the next child on the waiting list beginning the 5th of each month. If you leave the program for any reason and then want to re-enroll at a later date the \$45 registration fee will apply with the full month tuition. Re-enrollment is dependent on available space.

A \$10 multiple child discount will be given for each additional child in the same family. Full fee applies for the first child enrolled. Siblings must be registered at the same program site to receive discount.

If you need to cancel from our program, a two week written notice is required. In the case of a refund, a \$25 administrative fee will be charged. Registration fees are non-refundable.

Please note: If a two week notice is not given, fees will not be refundable.

General Program Policies

Transportation And Field Trip Policy

All transportation to and from the program site is provided by the child's parent or guardian. The Prince William County Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism does not offer any off-site field trips or provide transportation of any kind for our preschool program. At no time

is a teacher, or other staff member permitted to transport children.

Food Policy

Snacks will be provided each day by the preschool program and should not be brought from home. Our Preschool program follows the most recent nutritional requirements of the United States Department of Agriculture when selecting snacks. Children are allowed to receive second helpings of snacks. If this does not meet your child's needs, please contact your Preschool Manager. A current snack menu is posted in each classroom. **Please advise us of any food allergies your child may have or any food your child may not have for religious reasons. All food brought that is brought in for parties or celebrations must be in an original store bought food container.**

Communication

Contacting Staff

If you need to contact a staff member immediately, or would like to leave a message with one of our employees, please call the Front Desk at your program site.

Emergencies

In an Emergency Situation, the preschool staff will make every effort to speak with parents/guardians directly. If unable to do so, the designated Emergency Contacts will be contacted. Our facilities have an Emergency Preparedness Plan that includes procedures for staff to follow in the case of an emergency. The Emergency Preparedness Plan is available to the public upon request. To



request a copy, please contact the Preschool Program Manager at your program site.

Lines Of Authority

If you have any concerns or questions, please consult the Lead Teacher of your child's program. If the answer/action is unsatisfactory, or you need more information, please contact the Preschool Manager at your site.

Student Arrivals and Departures

Temperature checks for children and verbal health checks with the parent/guardian will be conducted during arrivals

When departing, all children must be signed out daily. For safety and security reasons, you should be prepared to show identification. Children will be released outside the classroom.

Parents/Guardians must designate authorized person(s) to be responsible for your child. Your child will not be released to anyone other than those you designate on the registration form. This information is kept in your child's file and will be referred to when releasing your child from our care.

In an emergency, we will accept a written note, from the legal parent/guardian, giving another adult temporary permission to pick up a child. It must be in writing in order for us to comply.

Please remember, once you have identified Authorized Adults for your child, we presume these are your wishes. If at any time, you want to add or delete Authorized Adults, please do so in writing. We cannot deny an Authorized Adult from picking up the child.

If there is a court order regarding the custody of a child(ren), then a copy of the court order must be on file at the program location. Preschool staff is not permitted to deny access of a parent to a child without a court order on file. A custodial parent shall be admitted into any child day program.

Such right of admission shall apply only while the child is in the child day program (63.2-1813 of the Code of Virginia).

The Prince William County Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism has no responsibility to communicate to other listed Authorized Adults when your child has been picked up. The responsibility of communication among Authorized Adults remains among those individuals.

What to bring/send with your child

Please pack a spare set of clothes each day.

Make sure your child is dressed in comfortable, easy to care for clothing that is appropriate for the prevailing weather.

Please label all belongings brought to school. Lost items will be kept in the classroom for a short time.

Children are to wear closed-toe shoes every day.

Please do not bring personally owned toys to school unless it is requested from your teacher. This can cause conflict in the classroom and teachers cannot be responsible for items that may be lost or broken.

Late Pick Up Fees

If you are running late, please contact your program site. **Please make every attempt to be on time; the teachers have very little time between classes. Repeat offenders may be removed from the program at any time at Preschool Manager's discretion.**

If you are late to pick up your child/children at dismissal time, you will be charged a late fee of \$5. After 15 minutes, it is an additional \$5 per minute. Late fees must be paid when you pick up your child.

Due to other responsibilities that the teachers have, your child may be taken to the Front Office or Manager's office to wait for your arrival. If we have not received a phone

call from you, a teacher will make every attempt to contact another parent, guardian or a listed emergency contact. If contact is unable to be made within 1 hour of dismissal time, the child will be turned over to Prince William County Police Department.

This same procedure will be followed if the child is not picked up for emergencies including but not limited to inclement weather or natural disasters.

Classroom Visitors

There will be no outside visitors allowed in the classrooms.

School Schedule

General Hours

All Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Preschool Programs follow the Prince William County Public School Calendar for scheduled school holidays and teacher workdays.

A preschool calendar for the 2020–2021 school year is included in this manual.

Student Health

Preschool staff will do their best to maintain a healthy environment. Parents can contribute to this effort by keeping sick children at home. Please make sure to notify your child's teachers if an absence is lasting three days or longer.

Please keep your child home if he/she has:

- A temperature over 100°F (must be fever free for 48 hours before returning to school)
- Recurrent vomiting or diarrhea (must be vomit/diarrhea free for 48 hours)
- Any communicable disease
- A combination of symptoms, that cannot be explained via other health reasons, would disqualify the child from daily participation.

Rashes, eye redness or discharge may be

symptoms of a contagious disease and therefore need to be identified by a physician. Children can return to class with a doctor's note stating they are not or no longer contagious and include a date of return. Children on antibiotics must be on medication for 48 hours before returning to school and symptom free.

All allergies or medical conditions, which may limit activities, should be brought to the attention of the staff. If your child becomes ill while attending preschool, parents will be notified as soon as possible so that arrangements for child pick up can be made.

Inclement Weather Schedule

DPRT Preschool and child care/before & after school programs do not automatically follow Prince William County School closure decisions. Decisions will be made internally based on actual weather conditions or expected forecast for closures, late openings or early closings. DPRT will make every effort to communicate a decision by 8 pm the night before for closings or late openings.

Health & Safety

Other policies and procedures we're implementing to reduce the risk of corona virus exposure include, but may not be limited to:

- Children with existing health conditions or compromised immune systems should not attend.
- Groups will be smaller with a lower total number of participants and a higher staff-to-child ratio. Drop-off and pick-up procedures will be adjusted.
- Intermingling between groups will be minimized and when possible, participants will not share communal supplies or toys.
- All activities will be structured to minimize contact between participants and social distancing will be continuously encouraged.

- Participants will spend more time engaged in play outside during appropriate weather conditions.
- We will have frequent handwashing and strictly enforced designated hand-washing times.
- Staff members are required to wear face coverings indoors and anytime 6ft distancing cannot occur when outdoors.
- Additional cleaning and sanitation practices will be implemented.
- Temperature checks for children and verbal health checks with the parent/guardian will be conducted daily in the morning and again mid-day. We will also do temperature check at dismissal that a supervisor will sign off on.
- If a child develops symptoms associated with COVID-19, they will be isolated, and they will have to be picked up. There will be a strict 48-hour sick policy. If a child has a fever, they cannot return until they are 48 hours fever free without the aid of medicine.
- Failure to comply with COVID-19 protocols can result in dismissal from the program.
- The way we operate may continue to change throughout the year as the Commonwealth and our local public health officials offer additional guidance.

Medication

If your child requires prescription and/or nonprescription medication, a Medication Authorization form must be completed by a parent/guardian and/or physician. A qualified Prince William County Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism staff will administer all age appropriate medication in accordance with the labeled instructions and the Medication Administration Training (MAT).

Over The Counter Medication (OTC) that will need to be administered **for less than 10**



days requires parent/guardian authorization on the Medication Consent form. OTC medications and prescription medications that will need to be administered **for more than 10 days** require authorization from both parent/guardian and a physician on the Medication Consent form.

When authorization for medication expires, the staff shall notify the parent/guardian that the medication needs to be picked up within 14 days or the parent/guardian must renew the authorization. Medications that are not picked up within 14 days will be appropriately disposed of by the Preschool Manager.

All medication must be:

- In the original container with the prescription label or direction label attached.
- Labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage amount and the time/times to be given.
- Any utensils needed to administer must be labeled with child's name.

Policy For Over-The-Counter Skin Products

The staff does not administer Sunscreen, Diaper Ointment/Cream or Insect Repellent. If you feel your child needs any of the above items applied, it must be done before they arrive.

Preschool Calendar 2020–2021		
September 8		School Begins
October 12	Preschool Closed	Divisionwide Professional Learning Day
November 2	Preschool Closed	Teacher Professional Development/Workday
November 3	Preschool Closed	Election Day — No school for All students — Virtual workday for teachers
November 11	Preschool Closed	Veterans Day Holiday
November 25–27	Preschool Closed	Thanksgiving Break for Students/Teachers
December 21–31	Preschool Closed	Winter Break for Students/Teachers
January 1	Preschool Closed	Winter Break for Students/Teachers
January 4		School Reopens
January 18	Preschool Closed	Martin Luther King Holiday
January 20	Preschool Closed	Presidential Inauguration Day Holiday (All schools and offices closed)
January 22		Elementary School 1/2 Day — AM but no PM classes
January 25	Preschool Closed	Teacher Workday
February 15	Preschool Closed	Washington's Birthday/Presidents' Day Holiday
March 29–April 2	Preschool Closed	Spring Break for Students/Teachers
April 5	Preschool Closed	Teacher Professional Development/Workday
May 28		Last Day of School

Behavior Management

In order to promote the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social well-being and growth, staff shall interact with the child and one another to provide needed help, comfort, support and:

- Respect personal privacy;
- Respect differences in cultural, ethnic, and family backgrounds;
- Encourage decision-making abilities;
- Promote ways of getting along;
- Encourage independence and self-direction; and
- Use consistency in applying expectations.

Behavioral guidance shall be constructive in nature, age and stage appropriate, and shall be intended to redirect children to appropriate behavior and resolve conflicts.

Forbidden Staff Actions

Our program staff is forbidden to do the following:

- Use physical punishment, such as: striking a child, roughly handling or shaking a child, restricting movement through binding or tying, forcing a child to assume an uncomfortable position, or using exercise as a punishment;
- Enclose a child in a small confined space or any space that the child cannot freely exit him/herself; however, this does not apply to the use of equipment such as cribs, play yards, high chairs, and safety gates when used with children pre-school age or younger for their intended purpose;
- Allow punishment by another child;
- Separate a child from the group so that the child is away from the hearing and vision of a staff member;
- Withhold or force food or rest;
- Use verbal remarks which are demeaning to the child;
- Punish a child for toileting accidents;
- Punish a child by applying unpleasant or harmful substances.

Suspected Child Abuse

All preschool staff members are familiar with the procedures for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect. Per our state licensing requirement all preschool staff are deemed mandated reporters, so by law we are obligated to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the Social Services Office.

Discipline Policies and Procedures

All students are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct (page 11). If behaviors that are not in compliance with the Code of Conduct are observed by the staff, the following basic steps will be followed.

For *Non-Physical Misbehavior*: (examples include yelling at teachers, grabbing toys from other children, repeatedly not following instructions):

- We use the quiet thinking time system. We will explain to the child why they are in the quiet thinking time, count 1-2-3, and then quiet thinking time is used.
- If it happens more than once during the day, we will notify the parent.

For *Physical Misbehavior* (examples include hitting, kicking, biting):

- Immediate notification of parent (serious bite could mean immediate dismissal from program).
- Conference with Lead Teacher and parent along with written warning. Preschool Manager will also be notified.
- Subject to dismissal by both Preschool Manager and lead teacher.



NOTE: Any of these steps may be modified based on the severity of a child's behavior.

Program Suspension and Dismissal Policy

Dismissal from the program may result when serious disciplinary challenges such as, but not limited to, failure to abide by Code of Conduct such as; hitting, biting, inability to participate within established ratios, or unable to stay with the group. In these types of situations the following procedure will be followed:

- **First Offense** – Written Warning (Teacher will talk to child & notify parent)
- **Second Offense** -Conference with parent, child, Teacher, & Preschool Manager
- **Third Offense** – Determine next course of action up to and including suspension or dismissal from the program.

This policy can be modified at the discretion of the Children's Program Manager and/or Preschool Manager based on the severity of a student's behavior. Refunds will be denied for such circumstances.

Dismissal from program may also result when customers are repeatedly late with making payments and/or non-payment of program fees. Payment is expected by established registration dates (see page 5 for "Procedures and

Payment"). Preschool staff will give parents a verbal and written reminder that payment is past due. If payment is not made by the first of the month, Preschool Manager makes one more contact to collect fees. If payment is not made from that communication, your child's place in our preschool program will be forfeited.



Preschool Code of Conduct

We understand that all behaviors, positive and negative, have a function. Children exhibiting inappropriate behaviors are usually trying to escape something (i.e. an activity such as circle time) or to obtain something (i.e. a toy or attention from a classmate or teacher). It is important to our teaching staff that we determine the reason for a child's behavior so that we can teach an appropriate replacement skill to help the child get his/her desired result.

Preschool staff will take the time to speak with children about their feelings that led to the inappropriate behavior. Preschoolers will be encouraged to use their words to express their feelings and solve their problems. Staff will help children verbalize their feelings and facilitate conflict resolution and problem-solving when necessary.

Preschool staff uses a variety of age-appropriate, research-based behavior intervention strategies including:

- Maintaining realistic expectations of children.
- Providing clear and simple limits.
- Preventive practices.
- Modeling appropriate behaviors.
- Positive redirection.

- Teaching of replacement skills.
- Conflict resolution /Problem-solving techniques.
- Providing logical and natural consequences for children's actions.
- Removing children from the situation until individual counseling is possible.

Unacceptable behaviors are

- Biting
- Hitting
- Destruction of property
- Inability to stay within group/classroom
- Non-participation

Preschool staff strive to maintain consistent and open communication with families regarding the progress of their students. You may be notified of minor behavioral incidents in the following ways: email, telephone, written communication or in person. A disciplinary report will be required for more serious incidents. In this case, you may be asked to come in and discuss the incident with your child's teacher and the Program Manager.

Should a child's behavior become a consistent challenge, the parents/guardians will be contacted to schedule a conference where next steps will be defined. Extreme behavioral situations that continue, despite all efforts, will be referred to the Program Manager and the Children's Program Manager.

Preschool Managers reserve the right to suspend or terminate a student from the preschool program if the child cannot meet the basic participation skills or violates the code of conduct. Every effort will be made to provide appropriate accommodations. The Preschool Manager reserves the right to forgo the Disciplinary Action Process and commence immediate suspension/dismissal of a student based on the severity of the behavior.



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