



A Creative Learning Experience

# Parent Handbook

## 2010 - 2011



## *Mission Statement*

*Van Meter Community Pre-Kindergarten provides a safe, nurturing, child-centered learning environment which is enticing, creative, and stimulating. It is our goal to prepare students to be life-long learners. This will be accomplished by recognizing the value of each individual and promoting academic and personal growth in a challenging and caring environment.*

## **Our Goals**

### **Goals for Children:**

- Children will show competency in social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development skills.
- Children will be enthusiastic and curious learners.
- Children will be safe and healthy.

### **Goals for Families:**

- Families will feel welcome in the classroom.
- Families will work with the school in a meaningful partnership to help their children be better prepared to learn to read and write.
- Families will advocate for their children.



## **Absences and Illnesses**

Please notify the preschool at 996-2030 if your child will not be present. If a child becomes ill at school, a staff member will contact the child's parent. In the event that a parent cannot be reached, a staff member will contact the emergency number provided.

In the event of an accident or injury which requires medical attention, staff shall immediately notify parent and/or medical personnel as instructed in writing by the parent on the Emergency Medical and Dental form. All teachers are First Aid and CPR certified.

For the health and safety of all the children, it is mandatory that sick children not be brought to school. Upon arrival at school, each child is observed by teaching staff for signs of illness or injury that could affect the child's ability to participate comfortably in the daily activities.

## **Arrival and Departure**

Children should arrive no earlier than 5 minutes before the session is to begin, and be escorted into the entry area by an adult. At the end of the session, children are to be picked up inside the building. Parents, or other authorized adults, are required to sign in and out their child. If an adult other than the parent is picking up the child, written permission from the parent is required. In the event of consistent late pick-ups, our policy is as follows: "After a 5 minute grace period, there will be a \$5.00 fine for every 5 minutes your child's driver is late. The child may not return to preschool until the fine is paid."

## **Assessment**

It is the preschool's belief that assessment of young children should be purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and take place in the natural setting by familiar adults. The results will be used for planning experiences for the children and to guide instruction. Assessment will never be used to label children or to include, or exclude, them from the program. A family's culture and child's experiences outside the school setting are recognized as being an important piece of the child's growth and development. All results will be kept confidential, placed in each child's file, and stored in a secure filing cabinet.

Children will be assessed in the following ways:

- Creative Curriculum Assessment: this assesses student progress in all developmental areas in the fall.
- Observational data: provides an ongoing anecdotal record of each child's progress during daily activities.
- Early Literacy Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDI): given at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to monitor the growth of early literacy skills (four-year-olds only)
- Child portfolios: organized by the teaching staff and include the assessments, observational data, and child work samples collected on an on-going basis.



Assessment information will be shared formally with families during Parent/Teacher conferences in the winter and spring. The preschool teacher will communicate weekly regarding children's activities and developmental milestones.

If, through observation or information on the Creative Curriculum assessment or IGDI, the teacher feels that there is a possible issue related to a developmental delay or other special need, she will communicate this to the family during a conference, sharing documentation of the concern. Suggestions for the next steps may include, with the knowledge and consent of the parents:

- a request made to Heartland Area Education Agency for support and additional ideas, or more formalized testing.

### **Confidentiality and Unlimited Access**

Under state law, information about a person in a childcare center, or the relative of a person in a childcare center, is confidential. Anyone who acquires such information through the operation of a childcare center may not disclose it, directly or indirectly, except upon inquiry before a court of law or with the written consent of the person. In the case of a child, written consent must be obtained from the parent or guardian or as otherwise specifically required or allowed by law.

Parents shall be afforded unlimited access to their children and to the provider caring for their children during the preschool's hours of operation, or whenever their children are in the care of a provider, unless parental contact is prohibited by court order. All parents and visitors are welcome.

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum is the framework for learning opportunities and experiences. It is a process by which learners obtain knowledge and understanding, while developing life skills. It is continually revised and evaluated to make learning fun and exciting.

Our preschool program uses Creative Curriculum®, a research-based curriculum designed for three- and four-year-olds. It addresses all areas of early learning: language and literacy, math, science, physical skills, and social skills. It provides children an opportunity to learn in a variety of ways- through play, problem solving, movement, art, music, drawing, writing, and listening. Suggestions for modification and adaptations are an integral part of the curriculum.

Our preschool also uses the Zaner-Bloser Handwriting program with our four-year-old class. This is the handwriting program that is used in the Van Meter Community School District. It teaches children through simple words and stories how to create each letter, both upper and lowercase.



## Daily Activities

A consistent daily schedule is planned to offer a balance of learning activities. Learning is both formal and informal. Play is planned for every day. Listening is balanced with talking, group activities with solitary time, indoors with outdoors, and quiet play with noisy play. Your child will have the opportunity for the following types of activities every day:

- Large and Small Group Activities
- Self-directed play
- Snack
- Story Time
- Outdoor activities
- Individual Activities
- Learning Center Activities – Art, Sensory Table, Writing, Library, Puzzles and Games, Blocks and Wheel toys, Dramatic Play, Computers, Listening Center

Lesson plans for each week are posted in the classroom showing how these activities are incorporated into the daily schedule.

## Days and Hours

Our preschool runs from September through May, and will begin with a Discovery Day. This is an excellent opportunity for parents to return completed forms, for the children to bring in their supplies, and for everyone to meet new friends and get acquainted with the staff and classroom. Please check the school calendar sent in your enrollment packet, or our website at [www.vanmeterprek.org](http://www.vanmeterprek.org).

We follow the same schedule as Van Meter Community School District. If the Van Meter District cancels school for inclement weather (announced on major radio TV and radio stations, such as WHO and KIOA), there will be no preschool that day. In the event of a cancellation, our make-up policy will be in effect: "The Van Meter Community Pre-Kindergarten will miss two preschool sessions in the two-day class and three sessions in the three-day class before make-up time will be scheduled. The make-up days(s) will be scheduled at the end of the school year at the discretion of the director."

Classes for 3 year olds are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00-11:30 a.m. Classes for 4 and 5 year olds are held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8:45-11:30 a.m. Schedules may vary according to enrollment. Please contact the director with any questions.

## Dress

We would like the children to come dressed in play clothes suitable for the current season. We do many messy activities at preschool and the children should be comfortable. Shoes should be suitable for jumping, galloping, skipping, hopping, and all the activities they may experience during play. If sunscreen and/or insect repellent are needed, parents should apply this before coming to school.



## **Enrollment**

Children from 3 to 5 years of age by September 15<sup>th</sup> may be enrolled. They must be completely toilet-trained before school begins. Admission is based on the availability of the space in the program. Continuing enrollment in the program is based on the families' fulfillment of financial obligations to the school. In matters of judgment on this issue, final responsibility rests with the Director and the Board. Families that do not pay their tuition may be discharged from the program.

Within six weeks after a child begins the program, health records that document the dates of service shall be submitted that show the child is current for routine screening test and immunizations according to the schedule recommended and published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The maximum class size is 15 children in each session based on square footage of the classroom. A teaching staff to child ratio of at least 1:10 will be maintained at all times to encourage adult-child interactions and promote activity among children.

## **Field Trips**

We will be taking a few field trips throughout the school year to acquaint the students with our community and the area around it. We do need parent volunteers. If you are interested, please mark "assist with field trips" on the Parent Volunteer form, which your child will be receiving the first week of school. Everyone will be notified in our monthly newsletter before each trip. Per state regulations, depending on your capacity as a volunteer, you may be required to complete a background and fingerprint check.

We sincerely appreciate our volunteers!

## **Guidance and Discipline**

Teaching staff will use positive guidance, redirection, and planning ahead to prevent problems. They will encourage appropriate behavior through the use of clear and consistent rules, and involve children in problem-solving to foster the child's own ability to become self-disciplined. Where the child understands words, discipline will be explained to the child before and at the time of any disciplinary action. Teaching staff will encourage children to respect other people, to be fair, respect property, and learn to be responsible for their actions. Teaching staff will use discipline that is clear, consistent, and understandable to the child. They will help children learn to persist when frustrated, play cooperatively with other children, use language to communicate needs, and learn turn-taking.



Our classroom rules are the following:

1. Walk in the classroom.
2. Keep your hands on your own body.
3. Be friends.
4. Listen to others.

Children may be asked to sit out for a short time if they are unable to behave appropriately, or safely, during an activity.

If a child consistently demonstrates inappropriate behavior that is unacceptable in a preschool classroom and/or harms our students or staff, the director has the authority to ask the parents to remove the child from the preschool program. Examples of inappropriate behaviors include, but are not limited to: hitting, kicking, biting, extremely short attention span and verbal abuse of teachers or other children. Parents may appeal to the board if this occurs. The final decision will be made by the Preschool Board and the Director.

### **Medication Procedures and Storage**

The giving or application of medication, including individual special medical procedures, shall be administered by staff only on written order or prescription from a physician to the child's parent(s) or guardians(s). *We do not give medication unless provided with a written prescription from a physician. This includes cough syrup, aspirin/Tylenol, allergy medication, asthma inhalers, etc.* All prescribed medications must be in the original container and stored in a locked box at preschool. A medication log will be maintained and initialed by staff member and parent if the medication is dispensed. Medication will be dispensed by the Director, or in her absence, the teacher's assistant. If any medication is administered, we will contact the parent as soon as possible.

### **Newsletter**

A monthly newsletter will be sent to the email account which you indicated on your enrollment form, to keep you informed of preschool activities. If you do not have an email account, a paper version will be provided. A snack and events calendar will be prepared. Please refer to it throughout the month to see what we will be doing.

Your child will also bring home Daily News each day. This will tell you what the theme was, what songs we sang, what our snack was, how your child's day was, and which centers your child played in that day. This will be a good discussion piece for you and your child at home.



## **Objects from Home**

Because the preschool program provides ample toys and learning materials for your child, we ask that you limit toys brought from home. If your child brings an “attachment” item from home, we ask that it is small enough to fit inside his/her backpack. Please do not allow children to bring, gum, candy, money, or toy guns to school. The program cannot be responsible for lost or broken toys brought from home.

## **Snack**

The children will take turns providing a nutritious snack and drink. The preschool will provide cups and napkins. A snack schedule will be included on the monthly calendar. Please consult the snack suggestion sheet at the end of this handbook for further details. Due to occasional Hepatitis A outbreaks, we are asking families to be extremely vigilant with hand washing when preparing homemade snacks.

## **Transportation**

Each child is to be brought to the preschool and picked up at the end of the daily session by a parent or other authorized adult. We do not provide transportation to and from school; however, we will be happy to help arrange carpools if necessary. The preschool building is located south of the Van Meter High School football field. Please use the access road when driving to and from our building.

## **Tuition**

The monthly tuition fee of \$75.00 for the 2-day session and \$95.00 for the 3-day session is due the first session of each month. Absences are not deducted from the monthly fee. This policy is necessary since our operation costs continue and we do save space for your child. If the tuition is more than one week late, a \$10.00 late fee will be charged. If a check is returned for any reason, there will be a \$20.00 service fee plus the \$10.00 late fee added to the monthly balance. The fees then become due immediately. If payment is more than one month behind, we will ask that your child not attend until you are current on your bill. After receiving two checks returned, we require that payment be made by cash or money order.

Other fees include a non-refundable registration fee of \$45.00, which will cover the cost of materials that your child will be using this year. This one-time fee is due with your child’s registration form to hold their spot in our program. **All** tuition and fees must be paid by April 10<sup>th</sup>, or your child may not be able to participate in the end-of-year activities, such as the all-school field trip or graduation.



Van Meter Pre-Kindergarten is committed to supporting and encouraging children and families in their educational process. Our belief is that all children should have the opportunity to attend a quality preschool program. Dallas or Madison County Empowerment Scholarships may be available to those needing financial assistance. Any financial problems or questions should be referred to the Van Meter Pre-Kindergarten Treasurer. Please ask the Director for their phone number.

### **Unrestricted Access**

“Unrestricted access” means that a person has contact with a child alone; has access in providing education, guidance, or discipline to a child; or has access to the facility beyond the passage area and room in which the person’s child is in is directly responsible for child care.

All staff, substitutes, and volunteers must have a background check completed before being responsible for the direct care of our children or have access to a child when a child is alone.



## Snack Suggestions

The following are some suggestions for nutritional snacks for our children. Please feel free to create your own ideas or use some of the many nutritional recipes you can find elsewhere. For birthdays, your child may bring decorated cookies, Rice Krispie treats, doughnuts, etc. Please **no cupcakes**. The State of Iowa requires our beverage to be milk (at least 2% white or chocolate) or 100% fruit juice.

Apple Slices	Cauliflower
Apricots	Carrot Sticks
Bananas	Celery
Cantaloupe	Cherry tomatoes
Cherries	Cucumber slices
Fruit Kabobs	(Veggies can be served with a dip, cheese, etc.)
Oranges	Peaches
Pineapple	Cheese cubes/slices
Pears	Ham Cubes
Graham Crackers	Hard-boiled eggs
Plums	Summer sausage/Pepperoni/Lunch Meat
Raisins	Bread (banana, pumpkin, etc.)
Strawberries	Breadsticks with dip
Tangerines	Cornbread
Watermelon	Goldfish or Ritz Crackers
Yogurt	English Muffins
Chex Mix	Granola or fruit bars
Finger Sandwiches	Tortilla Roll-Ups (ham and cheese, etc.)
Mini Muffins	Ants on a Log (celery, p.b., raisins)
Rice Cakes	Grapes
Popcorn	Bagels with cream cheese
Fruit Roll-Ups	Animal Crackers
Pudding cups	Dried Fruits
Applesauce	Trail Mix
Cheerios	
Pretzels	