



Eagle County Schools Early Childhood Program Handbook

Eagle County Schools Preschool Program

Welcome to our school! Our staff encourages your ideas, suggestions, and participation in your child's Early Childhood Education program. We are committed to promoting all areas of growth, and development, building self-esteem and a love of learning in children.

This handbook is provided as a guide to our program and to support a healthy and satisfying experience for you and your child. We want the time your child spends with us to be a cooperative effort between family, child, and staff, and one that will be a positive step in your child's educational experience. This handbook will be helpful in answering questions that may arise concerning our program. We ask that you keep it handy after reading the following pages carefully. If you have any questions, please contact your Preschool Director listed on the front page of this document.

Who We Are

The Eagle County Schools Preschool Program values small class size, low teacher-child ratios, individualized program planning and collaborative partnerships with families. We believe that each child is a unique and priceless gift entrusted to our care. We respect, value, and accept all children in our program as we guide and support their learning experiences.

Who Attends Our Preschool

The Eagle County Schools Early Childhood (ECE) program values diversity and we are proud that our program includes children, ages 3-5 years, from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. Through support from Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program and Eagle County Schools we are able to offer a high quality program to all children based on availability.

The support from the above agencies assures we can support children with special needs. To qualify for the special needs program a special education team will complete an evaluation to determine if and what type of support is needed. An individualized education plan (IEP) articulates the adaptations, modifications, frequency of attendance, and support services a child may require. The early intervention program is offered primarily in the morning, except in unusual circumstances where a child's needs cannot be met in the morning program alone. A parent of a child who has an IEP may prefer to purchase additional time in the preschool program, when space is available.

Any parent who has concerns about their child's development can access a free screening program by calling Child Find at 970-328-3750. Child Find provides screenings in vision, hearing, speech and language, and motor development for any child 0-5 years of age in Eagle County.

Some children qualify to participate in the program through the Eagle County Schools Head Start/ Colorado Preschool Program. If you would like more information about these programs please call the Early Childhood Office at 970-328-3942.

We are committed to keeping approximately one third of our enrollments for traditional preschool programming. Parents may enroll their children on full or half day basis. Unfortunately, our enrollment is limited. It is often difficult for us to meet the immediate need for preschool when it is requested. A waitlist is maintained and priority will be given in the following order:

- Children who attend five full days
- Children who attend five day half-days
- Children who attend alternative schedules

Program Description

The Eagle County Schools Preschool Program uses the ECS Rigorous Curriculum and the Creative Curriculum as the primary curriculums. Other programs such as Read, Play and Learn may be used as supplementary materials. The program uses developmentally appropriate, language-rich, literacy-based activities to support and extend the themes through activities that address all areas of a child's development: physical, emotional, social, linguistic, and cognitive.

We believe that children learn best through play, so our learning environment offers a variety of activities, materials, and experiences to promote each child's learning and development. We strive to create a balance between a child's self-initiated spontaneous learning and teacher-planned, structured activities and projects.

We provide opportunities for children to engage in hands-on, active learning that is intellectually engaging, socially relevant and personally meaningful to children. A balance of rest and active movement is included in the daily schedule. All activities are designed to foster self-esteem, self-control and independence.

Assessment of individual children's development and learning is essential and is used to adapt curriculum, teaching, communication with families and to evaluate our program's effectiveness. We assess children three times a year using Teaching Strategies GOLD, to track children's progress and development. We work in collaborative partnerships with families to achieve shared goals for their children.

Hours of Operation

The Preschool Program hours of operation are listed on the front page of this document. The preschool follows the school district calendar and is open on the days that the school district is in session. This calendar is given at the beginning of the school year. If you need additional copies you can find the calendar on the Eagle County Schools website. (www.eagleschools.net)

Children may not be dropped off before the start time listed, because there is no supervision before that time. Children must be picked up by the end time listed, or late pick-up fees of \$1.00 for each minute (starting at five minutes past the end time listed) will be charged. This charge applies for the half-day program as well.

If a child is not picked up by 30 minutes past the end time listed and parents or emergency contacts cannot be reached, staff will call the Police Department for assistance.

During hours of operation we have an open door policy. Families are always welcome and encouraged to stop by the preschool to visit, ask questions or help in the classroom. A two week (14 days) written notice is required for schedule changes or withdrawal from the program.

Sample Daily Schedule

AM: Free Choice, Good Morning Circle, Choice Time/snack, Story Circle, Small Group, Music, Lunch, Brushing teeth/Independent reading, Outdoor time, Story

PM: Nap/Rest Time, Closing circle, Snack

There are special events offered at the elementary schools that the preschool may attend. Videos are only used for special occasions. There is no television use.

Fees

Tuition is \$35.00 per full day \$25.00 per half day and \$10.00 for an extended day (afternoon). Parents are charged monthly in advance for every day that their child is scheduled to attend. We are not able to offer vacation or sick days so that we can provide our staff a consistent work schedule. **Payment is required prior to attendance and is due on the first day for the current month.** All checks are to be made payable to Eagle County Schools.

If tuition payment is not received by the 10th day of the month, we will begin to assess \$10/day charge on business days only (Monday through Friday), and will not exceed 10 business days or \$100. If payment is not received by the 10th business day, the child can no longer attend preschool.

Enrollment Procedures

The Colorado State Department of Human Services licenses the Eagle County Preschool Programs. We must meet the standards and requirements as set forth by Human Services, the Colorado Department of Education and the federal Head Start Performance Standards. Accountability to these various standards strengthens the overall quality of our preschool programs.

The Early Childhood Program follows the Eagle County Schools variance policy and children will attend the preschool determined by their home residence, whenever possible.

Upon acceptance into the program, each family will complete an online pre-registration process, which can be accessed at <http://www.eagleschools.net>. An appointment with the early childhood registrar will need to be scheduled to finalize the enrollment process. Each family must bring the child's birth certificate, immunization record and proof of residency to the appointment. A recent health examination/physical should be submitted within 30 days. Unfortunately, no child can attend without this information. Please note: some parents decide not to have their children immunized.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

All children are to be escorted directly to and from the classroom. Each child must be picked up by an adult authorized by the parent or guardian. The list of individuals authorized to pick-up will be maintained on the child's enrollment form and kept in the child's file. Please be sure the school is always provided with an up-to-date list of persons permitted to pick up your child. Children are only released to people for whom the preschool has written authorization.

Teachers will not release children to anyone else. Proper identification must be shown for an authorized person to pick up a child.

Families must sign children in and out each day. A sign in and out sheet will be posted by each classroom and includes parent/guardian signature and time of day. Any visitors to the classroom must also sign in and out on a separate form provided. Throughout the day, the children will be counted frequently to make sure all children are still present. At the end of the day, staff will check that all children have been signed out and do a visual sweep that all children have gone home.

If your child has a doctor's appointment and you need to bring him/her late please call and let the teacher know in advance at the preschool number listed. Your child's class may go on field trips with parent permission. Please call ahead if you will be late so that we can arrange for you to bring your child to the event or make other arrangements.

Snacks and Lunch

Lunch: The Eagle County Preschool Programs offer families a choice of bringing a sack lunch or buying a hot lunch from the cafeteria. Sack lunches should be clearly labeled. Please see the healthy lunch flyer for nutritious ideas for sack lunches. Hot lunches are ordered each morning. You may send in payment for hot lunches daily or pay by the week or month. All checks should be payable to Eagle County Schools. Please check at your school for current lunch and milk prices. Lunch is available at a reduced price or at no cost for those children who qualify.

Snacks for Preschool: The Eagle County Schools Preschool Program provides a nutritious breakfast each morning and snacks each morning and afternoon. A menu of snacks can be found in the classrooms.

Illness

It is important to all of our families and staff that our classroom environment is a healthy one. WE REQUEST THAT YOU DO NOT BRING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL IF S/HE IS SHOWING SIGNS OF ILLNESS (this includes fever, diarrhea, and vomiting). PLEASE DO NOT GIVE YOUR CHILD TYLENOL OR OTHER MEDICATION AND SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL. Only children well enough to participate fully in our program should be brought to school. We have NO provisions for a child to remain inside during outside playtime.

If your child becomes ill while at preschool, s/he will be isolated and you will be contacted immediately. It will be your responsibility to come immediately and pick up your child. If we are unable to reach you, we will begin contacting names on the emergency list. We ask that for your child's comfort and to reduce the risk of contagion, children be picked up within one hour of notification.

Deciding whether to keep your child at home or when to send a child home from preschool can be difficult. This causes changes in plans and makes life complicated, especially for working parents. The best way to be prepared for these unavoidable sick days is to plan ahead. Find out your employer's sick leave policies if you work during the day. If it is difficult for you to take time away from work, you may need to find an alternative caregiver for your child when s/he is too sick to be at preschool.

KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME IF:

- Fever – If your child had a fever the night before, 100.5 or higher, s/he should stay home the next day as temperatures go up in the afternoon.
- Vomiting – If your child vomits during the night, s/he should stay home for rest and a liquid or soft diet.
- Diarrhea – A child should not come to school with liquid stools!
- Contagious illness (Impetigo, ringworm, etc.) – These must be properly treated and proven non-contagious before a child can return to school.
- Coughs and Runny Noses – Your child may come to school as long as there is no fever or persistent cough.

THE GOLDEN RULE:

KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME IF YOU FEEL YOUR CHILD IS TOO SICK TO PLAY OUTSIDE FOR 60 MINUTES in any weather OR if s/he has any condition that requires one-on-one care OR if our child's illness prevents him/her from participating in the usual program routine.

Children need to be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning to the program. For all contagious diseases, a doctor's note will be required before a child can return to school. Sooner or later all children get sick. Please contact the preschool when your child is ill and describe the problem. If a specific diagnosis is made, such as strep throat, chicken pox, etc., please let us know so other families can be alerted.

Medications

If your child is taking an antibiotic, please do not send him/her to school until s/he has been taking the medication for 24 hours.

State law requires that we have a written prescription for all medication to be administered. All medications administered at school must have a doctor's note, including over-the-counter medications. Prescriptions will be stored in the health room and will be administered by the school nurse or other authorized personnel.

Over-the-counter products, such as Tylenol, aspirin, cough syrup, etc. provided by the parents may be administered at school ONLY with written permission from the parents and a note from the physician, which includes directions for administering the medication. Any preventative rash cream (for children in diapers) may be sent to school and applied so long as the child does not have open wounds or broken skin. Please clearly label any diaper rash cream for your child.

Accident/Emergency

If your child becomes ill or is injured at school, you will be contacted and an incident report completed. If we are unable to reach you, we will begin contacting the emergency numbers listed on your child's emergency card. It is vital for the preschool to have correct information in case of emergency.

We will seek medical attention if it is a serious injury and/or life threatening, or if the situation can escalate if they are not treated immediately.

PLEASE KEEP YOUR EMERGENCY CARDS UPDATED! WE MUST HAVE CURRENT TELEPHONE NUMBERS WHERE YOU CAN BE REACHED AT ALL TIMES! If we cannot reach a parent/guardian or an individual on the emergency card, we will contact the necessary emergency personnel. Please notify us with alternate phone contacts if you plan to be away from your usual phone number for the day. 911 will be called in the event that a child needs emergency medical attention and/or it is life threatening.

Personal Belongings/Clothing

Children should come prepared with a change of clothes in case of an accident. Please send an extra set of clothes with your child each day or feel free to leave a set at school. All clothing should be labeled with the child's first and last name for easy identification.

We will make every effort to ensure that your child's belongings are not lost while at school. However, we recommend that special toys or valuables (money) stay at home. The school will not be liable for any lost items.

Your child will play hard at school. S/he will be involved in craft projects and will get dirty. For this reason we ask that you send your child in washable, comfortable play clothes.

In the winter, all children need snow pants, boots, a warm coat, hat and mittens or gloves. Please send your child to school with appropriate clothing for our ever changing mountain weather. We will play outside everyday!

Sun Protection:

It is always a good idea to send your child to school with sunscreen already applied. The preschool staff may apply sunscreen that the school provides, with written authorization. If you send in sunscreen, please clearly label it with your child's first and last name.

Toileting and Diapering

Some children start preschool without being fully toilet trained. We are happy to work with you and your child through this transition. Children are encouraged to use bathrooms in each classroom, but are not "pushed" to use the bathroom unless they demonstrate that they are ready.

Please send adequate changes of clothing and diapers on a daily basis. For those children still in diapers or Pull-ups, please send several (5) diapers daily, wipes, ointment, and two changes of clothing all clearly labeled. Many parents bring enough supplies to keep at school to last for several weeks.

For children who are beginning to wear underpants, accidents will happen! Five or six changes of clothes may be necessary if your child attends all day. Diapers or Pull-ups may be needed during naptime. The preschool does not supply diapers or clothing. Please send in the necessary supplies so that we can help your child stay comfortable at school.

Discipline

The Eagle County Schools Preschool Program believes that helping young children acquire self-discipline, self-confidence and social skills is an important part of the Early Childhood curriculum. We clearly encourage children toward acceptable behavior and provide real opportunities for children to work collaboratively and build those social skills important later in life, such as cooperating, helping, negotiating, and talking with others to solve problems. Teachers use positive guidance techniques such as modeling and encouraging acceptable behavior, redirecting children to more acceptable activities, grouping children, setting clear limits and intervening to enforce consequences for unacceptable, harmful behavior. If a child does not respond to these positive guidance techniques, we would then schedule a conference with the parents to develop a plan on how to better support the child's social and emotional development. We believe that every child is unique and respect each child's developing capabilities. Our goal is to offer an environment of encouragement and genuine respect where children are able to develop confidence and a sense of competence.

Photographs

We often take pictures of children engaged in play and learning throughout the school year. These will be used in the classroom, used in school projects and shared at parent-teacher conferences. You will frequently see your child's pictures posted in the classroom. Please notify your director if you do not want your child's picture included in classroom displays

Transportation/Field Trips

We will not regularly transport children. All field trips will be walking field trips. Written permission is needed for a child to go on field trip. We may ask for volunteers to help us keep lower ratios while on the walking field trip.

Weather and Emergency Procedures

School Closure: Radio stations KQMT and KVMT will announce school closing as soon as the information is available. Information will be posted on the Eagle County Schools website at: ECALERT www.ecalert.org or at www.eagleschools.net.

If inclement weather prevents children from leaving school, staff will remain with the children until it is safe to transport them home. If there is a tornado watch, children will be taken to a safe area in the school. In the event of inclement weather, teachers will make a decision to stay inside, based on temperature, wind and ground conditions.

Fire and Security drills will be held periodically in an effort to teach children disciplined routines necessary in an emergency situation. Emergency procedures and safety routes are posted in each classroom.

While we have several systems in place to properly supervise children at all times, parents will be notified immediately if a child should become lost. If parents are unavailable, staff will reach individuals listed as the emergency contacts on the enrollment paperwork.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

All child-care staff is legally required to report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect to the State or County Department of Human Services immediately. Our philosophy is to act in the best interest of the child, to be as supportive and non-threatening as possible to the family in the program.

Parents are responsible for reporting to the classroom teacher, Family Services Coordinator or Preschool Director any inappropriate behavior or action toward children by staff. The Child Abuse number is (970) 328-7720.

Reporting Complaints

Families who have concerns regarding a teacher or other staff member should set up a time to meet directly with that person to discuss the issue. If the family is not satisfied with the result of that discussion, they should speak to the person's supervisor. The Preschool Director supervises all on site staff and any concerns regarding Preschool Directors should be taken to the Director of Early Childhood programs for Eagle County Schools, Shelley Smith at 328-3958.

Should a family feel that it is necessary to file a complaint concerning suspected licensing violations or child abuse, those concerns must be directed to the Colorado Department of Human Services. In Denver, please contact:

Department of Human Services
1575 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203
1-800-799-5876

Family Participation

Parents are encouraged to visit the preschool and actively participate in their child's preschool experience. Our open door policy welcomes and encourages parents to call or visit anytime. It is helpful to let the preschool staff know ahead of time when possible.

All visitors to the school are required to stop in the main office to sign in and receive a nametag prior to entering the classroom. Visitors to the preschool class are also required to sign in.

We hope that you will participate in your child's program in a variety of ways, such as:

- Reading to the children and doing storytelling activities
- Recording our stories on audiotape
- Assisting with classroom projects or organization
- Collecting donations for the classroom: classroom materials, dress-up clothing, special items for projects, etc.
- Assisting with field trips
- Helping to organize special events or celebrations
- Making games, signs, learning center activities
- Doing special indoor or outdoor activities with the children
- Helping to provide supervision during playground or learning center times
- Participating with classroom fundraising activities
- Attending parent evenings, workshops and support group activities.

These are a few ideas of how you can volunteer and contribute to your child's care and educational experience. Please let us know of any unique talents that you would like to offer or share with our preschool program. The most successful early childhood programs have strong parent involvement and family support. We always welcome your input!

Parent/Teacher Communication

The Eagle County Schools Preschool Program values open and frequent communication with parents. Parents are always welcome in the classroom!

A newsletter is sent home every month to keep families informed of what is being covered in school. All communication is sent in both English and Spanish.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are scheduled in the fall and in the spring. We love sharing information with you about your child's day. However, arrival and departure times are often not the best times for teacher conferences. Please feel free to request a conference when we need to have a longer discussion.

What is going on in the total life of a child can affect his/her preschool experience. Please keep teachers aware of those things that you feel will help them more effectively support your child.

We are glad that you enrolled your child in the Eagle County Schools Preschool Program and we are pleased to provide children and families a quality preschool experience. It is our goal that we are a support to you and your family. Please do not hesitate to call upon us with any questions or concerns. Your participation is always welcome!