



WELCOME

The D.C. West Early Education Program would like to welcome you and your child to the beginning of their formal education. As your child begins their early education experience with us, we are hopeful that it will be a positive and rewarding experience that will enable your child to master new skills in the world around them. We strive to provide an atmosphere where each child will develop skills at their own rate. We are committed to a philosophy that meets each child where they are in their development. We acknowledge you, the parent, as the child's first and most significant teacher, and seek to build upon the foundation you have laid.

Our goal is to nurture the growth of the whole child by providing an atmosphere that fosters social-emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, mathematics and physical development.

We are pleased to have you and your child become a part of our program. We want you to know that you are always welcome to visit your child's classroom.

The Early Education Staff,

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DC West Early Education Preschool Program Handbook

Records Required For Admission to Preschool

Before your child may attend the preschool program, the following must be provided to the school. They can be uploaded on PowerSchool, emailed to ltravis@dcwest.org or dropped off at the elementary school office.

1) A photocopy of your child's state issued Birth Certificate (the one with the State Seal is preferable). This is required by legislation commonly known as the "Missing Children Identification Act".

2) A copy of your child's Immunization Record. The Nebraska School Immunization Rules and Regulations require the following immunizations before attending classes:

- *4 Doses DTP/TD Vaccine
- *3 Doses Polio Vaccine
- *1 Dose MMR Vaccine at or after 12 months of age
- *3 Doses of Hib Vaccine or 1 Dose at or after 15 months
- *3 Doses of Hepatitis B Vaccine
- *1 Dose Varicella or Date of Chicken Pox

If you do not have a record of your child's immunizations, you must either obtain the record or your child will need to begin another series of immunizations. Exceptions to the immunization requirement are made only if a medical reason is documented by a physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner, or for valid religious objections.

3) Two forms of Proof of Residency. Types of documents accepted are: utility bill, bank or credit card statement, mortgage agreement, photo identification card, voter registration card, etc.

You will also be required to complete the **online enrollment forms on PowerSchool**, which includes important information regarding who your child may be released to in the event that different transportation arrangements must be made, who to contact in case there is an emergency in which the parents can not be reached, and important medical information questions, etc. This information will help us in providing a safe and healthy environment for your child.

Thank you for assisting us in complying with state requirements by providing this information to us before your child begins school.

Tuition

For families paying tuition, **it will be due the 15th of each month (Aug.-April). Your first payment is due no later than August 17th.** If tuition is not received 30 days after the due date, your child may be removed from the program. Full tuition is \$165.00 per month. Reduced tuition is available based on income guidelines found on the Reduced Tuition Application, which also requires completion of the Free/Reduced Meal application and supplemental documentation. For questions on tuition or to obtain a reduced tuition application to determine if you qualify for your child's tuition to be reduced. Please contact the district office at 402-359-2583.

Tuition can be paid to either the elementary school secretary or the Superintendent's secretary. Payments can also be made on-line through e-Funds. Please do not submit payments to preschool staff.

Cost of Meals

While at school students receive one meal. Meals are included in the price of tuition. For students receiving special education, meals will need to be paid for separately. Costs are according to the free/reduced federal guidelines.

Arrival Time

When dropping off your child please ensure that they are in the care of the preschool staff and are not left unattended. We ask that you park in the small parking lot North of the elementary school by the preschool playground. Please use the crosswalk at Door 15. Staff will be there to help your child into the building no earlier than 7:50 (AM session) and 12:05 (PM session).

Dismissal Time

Please follow the same drop off procedures to pick up your child. Staff will be by the preschool playground at 11:15 and 3:24. When it is raining and snowing we will be dismissed at Door 15. Promptness in picking up children is essential. The staff members have other responsibilities after the children leave, so please do your part in helping us stay on schedule. If you know you will not be able to pick your child up on time, please call the elementary school secretary.

Snow Days

On occasion the DC West School District closes due to severe weather conditions. Please listen to KFAB-AM or your local television for school closings. If school is closed for the day, both sessions of preschool will be canceled. If the district has a late start, there will be no AM preschool.

Family School

During the school year, there are two evenings planned for family school events. These nights offer the opportunity for families to engage in activities with their children and other families that attend the preschool program.

Early Education Center Staff

A variety of professional staff members are assigned to the preschool. All professional staff members hold required degrees, are certified by the State of Nebraska and are employed/contracted by your local school district.

The **Early Childhood Special Educator** organizes and manages the classroom and plans a wide variety of activities that encourage development of skills to meet the individual child's needs. The early childhood special educator also functions as a liaison to other staff and administrators.

The **Speech and Language Pathologist** plans individualized speech and language therapy programs for the children. The speech and language pathologist works to incorporate speech and language goals into the everyday school routine. Individual sessions and small groups are offered as needed. The speech pathologist also consults with parents to provide appropriate speech and language stimulation at home.

Paraprofessionals work directly with children in the classroom under the supervision of the certified staff. The use of paraeducators helps provide a lower child to staff ratio in the classroom and additional individualized programming.

Occupational and Physical Therapists work both in the classroom and individually with identified children to improve fine and gross motor skills and sensory regulation. The therapists also consult with teachers and parents to suggest activities that will encourage the child's motor development. Physical and occupational therapists are assigned to the classroom each Fall.

Psychologist is available to consult with parents and staff members and to evaluate children on an individual basis.

Curriculum

A Developmental Approach

In the DC West Early Education Program, our goal is to support your child toward a love of life-long learning through developmentally appropriate practices. We are sensitive to the characteristics of the young child at this age, their emerging abilities, and developmental limitations. We implement a developmental language-based curriculum, which is designed for preschool and prekindergarten children. We also supplement learning with Handwriting Without Tears, LaunchPad from Really Great Readers and Peer Mediated Social Skills.

During class time, children are given ample time to explore and learn at their own rate. The preschool child learns best by doing, and the daily routine offers many experiences that allow them to actively become involved with materials and the world around them. These processes help to establish personal responsibility, decision-making, reasoning and communication, which are skills children will use throughout life.

Your child will be engaging in Project-Based Learning while attending preschool. In project-based learning, children are encouraged and supported in discovering and exploring their interests, without time restrictions. The DC West Early Education Program's assessment is designed in accordance with Teaching Strategies Gold, which is the assessment chosen by the Nebraska State Department of Education for developmentally appropriate education for young children. It is a tool, using observational records to assess each child's learning and progress.

Daily Routine

Arrival: This is a very important part of your child's day, as it can "set the tone" for the entire school day. Teachers welcome children as they arrive and aid the child-parent separation process. During this brief and casual time, many important skills develop as children take care of their personal belongings (hanging up backpacks, coats, hats, mittens, etc.), wash their hands and check in.

Opening Meeting: During opening, the large group (the entire classroom) comes together for a short time. The children will sing some songs, greet others, participate in a "share time" and work on key academic concepts, such as letter and number recognition, color and shape recognition, literacy, and counting.

Literature: Reading is a critical component in a child's learning. A teacher will read to a large or small group each day, asking questions of the group and encouraging participation. Commenting on stories demonstrates comprehension, which is a skill that is essential, especially in future years. There is also an opportunity for building vocabulary and reinforcing concepts that are already in-place for many children. Together and individually, children enjoy literature. Children are also offered the opportunity to read independently and practice their own reading or "pretend reading" skills as they familiarize themselves with a wide variety of books that are available in each center.

Small Group: At this time, children work in smaller groups to facilitate a more teacher-planned time that often addresses specific skills such as using counting, drawing/writing, sorting, and exploring new materials that will be placed in interest areas/centers during free choice time. Although the adults introduce the activity and set of materials, each child is able to work with the materials at their own development. The teachers develop lesson plans with individualization in mind.

Free Choice Learning Centers: Free Choice Time is the longest portion of the day. During this time, each child selects learning centers to “work” in. Adults move around the room, observing how each child plays, engaging with them and supporting them in their play. Common social-emotional goals lend well to this time: problem solving, and entering into others play. This encourages, extends, and sets up new problem-solving situations. The majority of observations for progress in learning are collected during this time. When a child is finished in an area of interest, they are expected to pick up their items before moving to another area.

Meals: This is a time for children and adults to enjoy healthy food in a supportive social setting. It is a time for children to share their individual thoughts and stories with adults and other children. Many language and cognitive concepts are encouraged during mealtime.

Large Motor: During this period, the entire group is involved in motor activities either indoors or outdoors. Children have a chance to practice their large muscle skills with balls, bean bags, and with other outdoor/indoor play equipment.

Closing Meeting: During the final group of the day, the activities of the day are reviewed, encouraging language development and turn-taking. This is also a time when children can sing songs and do finger plays.

Your Child at School

Good communication between school and home is necessary to foster children’s development. The staff is interested in any information providing insight into your child’s behavior, especially unusual circumstances such as inability to sleep well at night, a newborn in the family, a parent’s absence, or houseguests. Please do not hesitate to inform us about such matters, as this will allow us to help your child. ***If a child has any food allergies or special dietary needs or restrictions, we ask that the parent inform the teacher and health office.***

Please send a backpack or bag to school every day for your child to transport their papers and other possessions. Work will be sent home daily and all important information will be sent on the last day of each school week. The most effective way to be involved in your child’s education is by showing interest in what your child is doing at school. Reviewing the materials they bring home would be one way to initiate a conversation and show your interest.

Please leave all toys, money, and candy at home. When your child wants to bring something to school, we ask that the child and/or parent get permission from the classroom teacher. There will be times throughout the year when your child will be invited to bring something from home to share with the class.

School Clothes and Supplies

At the beginning of the school year, a change of clothing in case of accidents will be required. Please provide us with a suitable change of clothing, including socks and underwear. Remember to consider the weather when providing clothing. If your child wears diapers, please make arrangements to have enough supplies at school to accommodate your child's needs. **Please mark each item of your child's clothing with their name** so we can get the proper clothing home with the right child.

The ideal shoe choice is sneakers/tennis shoes. Sturdy shoes and play clothes enable your child to participate freely in all preschool activities. Most styles of sandals, flip flops, slick soled shoes, jellies, and boots **are not as safe** or as adaptable to the preschool's equipment and activities. Let your child wear clothes they can easily manage for the bathroom. Avoid dressing your child in their best clothes in case of spills and messy activities. The children are here to "learn by doing" and cannot do this if pressures are placed on them to stay neat and tidy at all times.

Health

Please call the elementary school health office & e-mail the teacher when your child is ill and will be absent from school. Please notify your transportation if applicable.

It is the parent's responsibility to inform and update the school regarding their child's health status. This assists staff in identifying potential classroom emergencies and health issues, which may affect your child's learning. It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that the school always has current emergency contacts and phone numbers.

A child who is ill should be kept home from school until they are well enough to return to a normal routine. Proper care in the early stages of an illness can reduce recovery time for the ill child and reduce the possibility of spreading the illness to others. The following are guidelines to assist you in deciding when your child needs to stay home from school.

Fever of 100° or greater: A child should be fever-free for 24 hours without use of medication before returning to school. If your child develops a fever while at school, you will be contacted to promptly pick up your child.

Vomiting/Diarrhea: If these symptoms occur two or more times during the school day, you will be contacted to pick up your child. Please keep your child home as long as these symptoms occur. Be sure your child is able to tolerate fluids and food without difficulty before returning to school.

Respiratory Illness: Respiratory illnesses are easily spread from person to person. If your child has a respiratory illness and is able to participate in the daily activities, they may attend preschool. Please remember that some children in our classrooms are very susceptible to infection. We can decrease the spread of illnesses by covering coughs/sneezes, avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth and properly washing hands.

Irritability/Fatigue: These conditions suggest the possibility of the beginning of an illness. If your child is unable to participate in the daily routine and needs more care than our staff can provide, you will be contacted to pick up your child as soon as possible.

Suspected Contagious Disease: A child will be sent home until identified symptoms (**rashes, pink eye, ringworm, chickenpox, strep throat, etc.**) are evaluated and conditions to return to school are documented by a healthcare provider.

Medication

Medication will be administered to students during regular school hours only if it is required to enable a student to attend classes. We will not purchase, prescribe, or provide any medication (including cough drops) to any student. Parents who wish students to receive medication should make provisions with the health office according to regulations.

When a student is required to take medication, the following regulations must be followed:

- 1) The DC West medication authorization must be completed detailing written orders from the physician, including the name of the drug, dosage, and time interval the medication is to be given; and written parent permission requesting the compliance with physician's order. The medication must be given directly to a staff member and **not placed in the child's backpack.**
- 2) The parent or legal guardian is responsible for the safe transport of medication to school. The medication must be in the original or pharmacy container appropriately labeled with the student's name, date prescribed, name of medication, dosage and time medication is to be given.
- 3) Medication will be administered by a designated person who has demonstrated competency in medication provision.
- 4) A written record is to be kept of all medications given.
- 5) Medication must be securely stored.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Conferences take place two times a year with your child's teacher (October/March). For a child with an IFSP/IEP, one conference will be optional. The dates for the conferences are listed on the school calendar.

Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)/Individual Education Plan (IEP)

For those children receiving Special Education Services, an IEP or IFSP will be developed following the evaluation (verification) and before the child is placed in the Early Education Program. This IEP/IFSP will be reviewed on a semi-annual/annual basis. Parent input is vitally important in creating a complete and useful IEP/IFSP. Parental participation in the IEP/IFSP is essential to program success and is required by state regulations. Every effort will be made to

find an acceptable time and place for the parents to attend the meeting. Personnel typically attending the IEP/IFSP reviews may include teachers, therapists, services coordinator, and school district representatives. New goals and objectives developed from suggestions by those present may be added to the IEP/IFSP at this meeting. Progress reports and testing data may also be discussed.

Parent/Teacher Communication

The staff will schedule formal meetings/conferences to review your child's progress. Less formal ways of communicating (i.e., e-mails, conversations, daily notes, phone calls, home visits) are just as important. Please, always feel free to contact your child's teacher. We can best support your child together.

Family Involvement

The support of your child's education is one of the most effective ways of ensuring positive growth and development. Our early education center embraces a strong family involvement component to the program. Every family is unique and we understand that each has a different type of routine. We offer a variety of ways for you to support and be involved in your child's education. We encourage families to communicate and participate in how best fits your family.

Classroom Visits

The DC West Preschool may offer special visitor days, however, you are always welcome to visit your child's classroom.

Volunteering

Any way you are able to support the program is always appreciated. This can range from classroom participation, to helping out in your own home (i.e. book orders, cutting lamination), to volunteering to organize a function. If you are interested in volunteering, please talk to a preschool staff member.