

Palisades Park Public Schools

**THE
EARLY CHILDHOOD
CENTER**

**3 & 4 year old program
& Kindergarten**



**FAMILY HANDBOOK
2021 ~ 2022**

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Palisades Park Public Schools' Mission Statement

The Palisades Park School District, committed to meeting the evolving needs in a nurturing environment of mutual respect, prepares graduates to value life-long learning and develop skills and attitudes to make meaningful contributions as responsible members of a diverse community, ready to compete in a global economy.

Core Values of the Palisades Park Public Schools

We believe that:

- All individuals have intrinsic value and are defined by their character.
- Respect for diversity enriches community.
- All individuals can contribute to strengthening the community.
- A community thrives when it protects, nurtures, and educates all its members.
- A family, in all its forms, is a critical element in shaping an individual.

Early Childhood Center Program Goals

We strive:

- To implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum that builds on children's interests and encourages active learning
- To introduce children to beginning concepts of art, language, mathematics, music, science and social studies as outlined in the NJ Department of Education's Preschool Program Expectations: Standards of Quality
- To provide a balance of both teacher-facilitated and child-initiated activities
- To support and encourage the intellectual (cognitive), emotional, social, physical, language and creative development of young children
- To provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for children
- To meet the individual needs of each child
- To establish positive relationships with families
- To demonstrate cultural awareness and respect for our diverse community

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Early Childhood Center has strived to create and maintain an atmosphere in which children feel valued and are treated with respect. In a safe, healthy and nurturing environment, we encourage the development of self-confidence, self-respect and the joy of learning in our students. We accept and treat each child as special and unique with the expectations that he/she will become a valued and productive member of our school community.

We are culturally aware and respectful of the globally diverse population of our community. We are dedicated to forming and maintaining positive partnerships between children, families and our staff members.

The Early Childhood Center uses play as the foundation for learning. Through play, children are able to develop cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally as they interact with the each other in the classroom setting. Developmentally appropriate materials and props are thoughtfully chosen and introduced into the various learning centers to enhance the children's natural abilities toward exploration, active learning and role-playing.

We know that young children's learning is based on prior experiences. While building on children's interests and development, ECC staff members facilitate learning through their interactions and questions. We follow the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practices. Our curriculum is consistent with the NJ Department of Education's Preschool and Kindergarten Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

The Early Childhood Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, sex, religion, creed, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. ECC and the Palisades Park Public School's policies and practices are consistent with federal and state laws pertaining to equal opportunity in admissions and education policies, and other school-administered programs.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS AND PARTICIPATION

Because strong, positive partnerships with families are an important component of the Early Childhood Center's philosophy and goals, the program provides opportunities for families to feel comfortable with the Center and its staff through the following activities:

- Back-to-School Night
- ECC staff members meet and greet the children and family members upon arrival and departure each day.
- Formal parent-teacher conferences

PALISADES PARK DISTRICT WEBSITE

Please visit the Palisades Park District website for information relating to the Early Childhood Center. The district website is www.palpkschools.org

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Early Childhood Center for 3 , 4, and 5 year-old children is located in the Dr. Charles Smith Jr. Early Childhood Center. It boasts well-equipped classrooms and a fenced-in playground adjacent to the facility.

All of our programs are now full day.

Arrival: The students will arrive at their assigned door and line up inside th school.

Parents must walk their child to the ECC Entrance. Classroom Aides and/or teachers will be at the Early Childhood entrance and will escort your child to class. All school doors are locked during the school day. **Therefore, if you arrive late to drop off/ pick up your child or need to enter the building for any reason during the day, you must enter the building and sign in at the main entrance of the school.**

Dismissal: All Pre-K students are dismissed through the doors they are assigned to arrive through.

THE PARKING LOT IS ASSIGNED PARKING FOR STAFF MEMBERS ONLY. To avoid traffic congestion, please pick your child up promptly and exit the school grounds.

Pre-K students will have lunch from 10:42 am-11:22 am. Kindergarten students will have lunch either from 11:26 am- 12:06 pm or 12:10 pm- 12:50 pm. The students will eat their lunch in their classrooms. You can provide a lunch for your child or purchase a hot lunch. To provide money online go to PayForIt.net.

ABOUT THE STAFF

The teachers and the aides at the Early Childhood Center possess a wealth of knowledge and experience gained from many years of working with young children. All teachers are Highly-Qualified, New Jersey state-certified teachers.

In addition to its regular teaching staff, the ECC has the following support staff members:

- Speech/Language Specialists
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Behaviorist
- Child Study Team
- Certified art, music, physical education, and technology teachers.

Teachers and aides attend district-sponsored staff development activities several times each year, as well as independent activities for professional growth and development.

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum activities at the ECC focus on the development of the whole child. They are consistent with the guidelines developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Developmentally Appropriate Practices and with the New Jersey Department of Education's Early Childhood Program Expectations: Standards of Quality. As children participate in meaningful, hands-on tasks they are acquiring skills and knowledge that include but are not limited to the following:

- CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT SKILLS include exposure and experimentation in art, dramatic play, movement and music
- LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS include speaking, listening, retelling, comprehending, developing and expanding vocabulary, pre-reading and pre-writing skills which include exposure to letters, words and environmental print.
- MATHEMATICS SKILLS AND PROCESSES include counting, matching, seriating, patterning, classifying, sorting, graphing, measuring, and recognition of numbers, shapes and quantity.
- SCIENCE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS include observing, predicting, experimenting, caring for living and non-living things, discovering and using scientific equipment.
- PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS include the development and control of both small and large muscle groups, within the body and in space.

- PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR SKILLS include cooperating, sharing, being kind to others, problem solving, and turn-taking.

THE CREATIVE CURRICULUM FOR PRESCHOOL

The Early Childhood Center has adopted *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* from one of the NJ-State approved curricula.

“The Creative Curriculum approach deals with all four developmental areas: Social/Emotional, Physical, Cognitive and Language. We address these areas through various interest areas or learning centers in the classroom. We have specific learning objectives that we observe knowing that each student’s learning is individualized and at his/her own pace. We look at a partnership between the teacher, the family, the learning environment, how children learn and grow, and what children learn. Based solidly on theory and research, these five components share equal weight in comprising the Creative Curriculum.”

“The Creative Curriculum is designed to have children learn through hands-on experiences and through play. Each learning interest area touches upon all development areas. The teacher guides children through the learning centers that reinforce their interests. Children have opportunities to learn at their own pace and to their own abilities.”

CREATIVITY AND ART EXPERIENCES

The ECC program balances “arts and crafts” through both teacher-directed activities for skill development with child-initiated activities for self-expression and exploration of materials. Some teacher-directed, pattern-based crafts are used for practice in skills such as following instructions, counting, color and shape identification, etc. A wide variety of art media is available for regular use by the children (crayons, markers, paint, play-dough, glue, collage materials, etc.). Open-ended, or process-oriented art is encouraged as the children independently explore different materials and express themselves freely. Each child works at his/her own level and pace.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Teachers perform informal student assessments throughout the year. Some assessment instruments are administered individually to each child in small blocks of time during class. Assessments provide some basic information on each child’s knowledge and skills in the areas of Language, Cognition, Gross and Fine Motor (Large and Small Muscle) Development, and Pro-social Behavior.

Teachers continually monitor each child’s progress and skill development. In November, February and June, parents will receive a progress and planning report, which is a summary of the child’s developmental progress. In addition, a child’s progress is shared with parents during the annual parent-teacher conference in the spring.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Formal parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year for most students. Children with special needs have regularly scheduled meetings with the Child Study Team to discuss the child’s progress and needs. Appointments are made for conferences after school from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm; special arrangements can be made to accommodate those families who cannot attend after school conferences.

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

THE ADJUSTMENT PROCESS

For many children, the Early Childhood Center will be their first of many steps on the road toward independence and their first experience with the world outside their home and family. This can be exciting, but it can also be a difficult time for children and parents alike. At the ECC, we help to encourage each child's natural tendency toward growth, while at the same time understanding his/her need for safety and security. The process of adjusting to school is different with each child and parent/family member. There is no easy way to know the length of time it will take for your child to become comfortable in school.

Adults are urged to arrive **on time** for dismissal to allay any fears about being "forgotten" or "left" at school.

SEPARATION ISSUES

It is not uncommon for children to feel anxious during their first days or weeks in a new situation. When it is time for school, please say good-bye to your child at the doorway and leave right away.

If you have specific concerns about your child's ability to separate, please speak to his/her teacher. Every effort will be made to facilitate a positive and successful transition into school. It is important to work cooperatively with your child's teacher. Our staff members have many years of experience with this common problem.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Family members are asked to call the school when their child will be absent stating a specific reason for the absence. Please call 201-947-2761.

AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF CHILDREN

In order to assure the safety and security of each child attending the Early Childhood Center, parents/guardians are required to complete an Authorization for Release of Children form. The name, relationship to the child, address, and telephone number of each authorized person must be listed. Changes to the form can be made during the year as necessary. In cases of custodial difficulties, unauthorized people must be listed and a copy of the appropriate legal documentation attached.

If a teacher or aide is unsure about the person picking up a child, a phone call will be made to his/her parents for verification before the child is released to the individual.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

The ECC may close due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances. The Palisades Park Public Schools utilizes an Alert System, which will call each student's phone number with a recorded message. In the event of poor weather conditions, parents are urged to use personal discretion in deciding to send their children to school.

DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The Early Childhood Center's approach to discipline requires positive and developmentally appropriate techniques that ensure a child's physical and psychological safety.

Classroom rules and consequences are always age appropriate, definable, enforceable and consistent. We focus on the behavior, not the child. We validate children's positive behavior, promote confidence in their ability, and encourage pro-social growth.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DISPENSING MEDICATIONS AT SCHOOL

Most medications can be given to children at home. In the event of a serious allergy or other medical condition requiring the dispensing of medication at school, a special form must be completed by both the parent and the child's physician, and brought to school along with the medication, where it will be kept in a locked cabinet. Only the school nurse is allowed to administer medication as per doctor's orders.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL PLAN

If a child demonstrates signs and symptoms of illness, the school nurse will assess the student. If he/she is unavailable, the teacher will use his/her best judgment to assess the child. If the child is too ill to remain in school, the child's parent or designee will be called to pick up the child from school.

Please provide the nurse with any important medical information. Any medications needed for your child will be kept in the nurse's office in a locked cabinet.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN AND FIRE DRILLS

In accordance with the Palisades Park emergency evacuation plan, drills are executed twice per month. Classes in the Early Childhood Center have emergency directions and maps posted in each classroom near the door.

In the event of an emergency of a different nature, ECC classes and students will follow evacuation/lock-down procedures as outlined in the ECC Faculty Handbook or determined by the Palisades Park Police Department.

HAND-WASHING

Hand washing is the first line of defense against infectious disease. Many studies show that unwashed or improperly washed hands are the primary carriers of infections. Children will be instructed in proper hand-washing techniques.

ILLNESSES AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Children attending the Early Childhood Center must be in good health as certified by a licensed physician and be fully immunized. A physical examination is required prior to any child being enrolled in the ECC program.

If your child shows any sign of illness, allow at least **24 symptom-free hours** before sending him/her back to school. This is especially important after episodes involving fever, vomiting and/or diarrhea.

Once the child is symptom-free or a licensed physician indicates that the child poses no serious health risk to him/herself or others, the child may return to the Early Childhood Center.

NUT-SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To address the current rise in allergies that may result in an anaphylactic reaction in some children, the Early Childhood Center strives to maintain a nut-safe environment. No foods, snacks, birthday treats or bake-sale items are permitted to have nuts.

SPECIAL DIETARY RESTRICTIONS AND/OR FOOD ALLERGIES

For children with food allergies or specific dietary restrictions, the child's name and allergy or restriction will be stated to teachers with any modifications to be followed. Special foods provided for children by families will be clearly labeled with the child's name and class.

Prior to snack, children will wash hands or use antibacterial wipes to clean their hands. Tables will also be cleaned and disinfected both before and after snack.

TOILETING PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN

All ECC children should be fully toilet-trained (although we will work with them if they have not yet mastered the concept) and able to care for their toileting needs independently. However, special circumstance will always be taken into consideration for individual children. Occasionally, young children have accidents. To be prepared for such an "emergency," a complete change of clothing (underwear, socks, shirt and pants or shorts) must be provided and kept in each child's cubby.

Children should be able to manage changing their own clothing without adult assistance. If a child is unable or unwilling to change independently, a parent/family member will be called.

A Toileting Guidelines document will be shared with parents, signed, and returned to the school.