

Ithaca City School District Prekindergarten Program

**2021-2022
Family Handbook**

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PROGRAM OPERATION

The Ithaca City School District Prekindergarten program is located in schools throughout the Ithaca City School District. **The program follows the ICSD calendar.**

The Prekindergarten Program office is located at 400 Lake St., Ithaca, NY, 14850. The telephone numbers are 277-3060 or 274-2208. Please call us with any questions.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Educator For Inclusion Program/CPSE | Deborah Jordan |
| Prekindergarten Secretary | Deb Mahool |
| CPSE Secretary | Shelly Caveney |

Program locations, classroom telephone numbers, and hours are as follows:

Belle Sherman School, 501 Mitchell Street, 274-6832
Connie Sczepanski: Mon-Thurs 8:00-2:00 Fri 8:00-10:30

Beverly J. Martin School, 302 W. Buffalo Street, ask teacher for telephone number
Elizabeth Holman: Mon-Thurs 8:00-2:00 Fri 8:00-10:30
Audrey Hopkins: Mon-Fri 7:45-12:45
Anne Modlin: Mon-Fri 7:45-12:45
TBD: Mon-Fri 7:45-12:45

Caroline School, 2439 Slaterville Road
Deanna Crossgrove: Mon-Thurs 8:00-2:00 Fri 8:00-10:30, 539-6102
Elizabeth Inman: Mon-Fri 7:45-12:45, 882-9869

Enfield School, 20 Enfield Main Road, 274-2320
Darcy Hermann-Raponi: Mon-Thurs 8:00-2:00 Fri 8:00-10:30
Sheri McWhorter: Mon-Thurs 8:00-2:00 Fri 8:00-10:30

Fall Creek School, 202 King Street, 274-2214
Sarah Smith: Mon-Thurs 8:00-2:00 Fri 8:00-10:30

South Hill School, 520 Hudson Street
Kelly Craft: Mon-Thurs 8:00-2:00 Fri 8:00-10:30, 257-8658
Melissa Sylvester: Mon-Fri 7:45-12:45, 274-2363

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

When the schools in the Ithaca City School District are closed, the Prekindergarten Program will be closed. Listen for announcements on the local radio stations.

EDUCATION PROGRAM

Our teachers understand that children develop at different rates and learn in different ways. Play is a child's 'work'. Our program provides experiences for young children to continue to develop their skills and interests as they play with others and on their own .

Our classrooms provide comprehensive programs based on the belief that young children learn best when they are in learning environments that provide:

- Positive, responsive relationships with adults
- Opportunities to establish relationships with their peers and adults of varied ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds
- Experiences that support cognitive, social, emotional, language, and motor development
- Opportunities to construct knowledge through play and active learning in multiple and varied modalities
- Experiences where they are encouraged to be speakers, listeners, readers and writers
- Exposure to and appreciation of diversity in the context of an anti-biased approach
- Welcoming settings where families plan for their child's education and participate in their child's learning experiences
- Individualized observation, assessment, and planning for children
- Programs that support children's health and nutrition
- Evaluation and support services to children with special needs in the "least restrictive environment"



CLOTHING

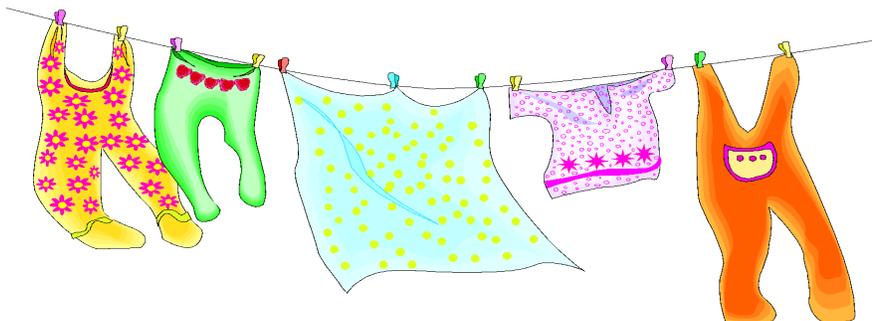
Children should wear comfortable, washable, play clothes. We do many messy activities in school and on home visits, so please be sure your child wears washable clothes. It is not necessary to be dressed up for school; also, your child should not need help with clothing to use the bathroom. Bodysuits, jumpsuits, and belts are not the best choice, if your child cannot put them on or take them off independently.

Sneakers and tie shoes are recommended. It is important for your child to wear good footwear so that s/he can run, jump, and climb safely. Other footwear should have low heels and cover both the heels and toes.

In the winter, your child will need to wear a warm coat or snowsuit, a hat, mittens and boots. We play outside everyday unless the weather is extremely cold. Boots and snowsuits may need to be worn even when the snow is melted to protect clothing from the mud.

Please send an extra set of clothing to leave in school in case of spills and accidents. Soiled clothing will be sent home. Remember to return extra clothing so that your child always has a complete set on hand.

Please put your child's name on clothing so they do not get confused with another child's clothes.



ARTICLES FROM HOME

A sharing time for items from home may be built into some day's schedule. However, the following items should be left at home: toys, toy guns, money, candy, gum, nuts or objects meant to be put in the mouth (whistles, horns, bubble pipes.) Please caution your child against bringing special treasures or fragile items to the classroom. With a classroom of children we cannot promise they will stay safe. Your child may bring a book to be shared, but please mark the book with your child's name. "Warm fuzzies" (blanket, soft toy, etc.) may offer your child security during naptime. These are accepted without question.

MEAL SERVICE

Meals are an important part of our program. They give children an opportunity to try new foods and get the nutrients they need to stay healthy. Mealtimes are relaxed and give children and teachers a pleasant time to socialize together. It is an opportunity for children to develop skills in a wide range of areas such as language, fine motor, social, and problem solving.

Classrooms serve breakfast, snack and lunch each full day and breakfast on half days. Children are allowed to decide if and how much they will eat. We let them pick and choose from the food that we or you make available. We encourage them to try all foods, but never force or bribe them to taste or finish any food, including milk.

Meals are provided for children who are eligible for free lunch. Teachers will give families the necessary paperwork to fill out at the beginning of the school year. Families who are not eligible for this service can purchase meals at school or send meals from home. Your child's teacher will let you know the cost and payment procedure.



SPECIAL SERVICES

Sometimes pre-school children need EXTRA HELP in working on:

- Large or small muscle coordination
- Learning colors, counting, and basic concepts like big/little, same/different
- Following classroom routines and getting along with others
- Speech and language development

If you or a staff member thinks a child may need extra help, or if the health and language screening shows there may be a special need, we will ask your permission to arrange for an evaluation by a professional such as a speech therapist.

If extra help such as speech therapy is recommended for your child, with your permission, your child may receive services at school.

If you have any questions about special services talk with your child's teacher.

TEACHER/FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between families and teachers provide the best possible experience for children and families. Teachers and families both play equally important roles in this partnership.

The Teacher's Part

Teachers create a safe, caring learning environment that is both supportive and challenging for children.

Teachers meet with families to formally discuss each child's development 4 times a year.

Teachers are available to talk with families, answer questions, and evaluate the program throughout the year. They communicate regularly with families about classroom activities.

Teachers have an open door policy where families may drop in on the classroom at any time. Teachers provide opportunities and encourage families to participate, when possible, in the daily life of the classroom.

The Family's Part

Please communicate and meet with your child's teachers during the program year.

Teachers try to accommodate to your schedule and can meet with you both at school and at your home. The telephone and notes also help to maintain communication when in person meetings are difficult to schedule.

Please follow the procedures we outline in this book about attendance, illness, and transportation.

Please keep informed of school activities by reading the newsletters and notes that teachers send home. Please contact staff if you have any questions about materials you have received.

Please notify staff in writing of changes in the addresses and phone numbers of your family, employment, and sitters/childcare providers. And please let staff know about any incidents that might impact on your child (i.e. the family's dog getting hurt.)

If your family's schedule permits, please come to some classroom events like field trips or luncheons. You are welcome to visit whenever you wish. We appreciate it when family members can volunteer or substitute in our classrooms. Please remember to sign in and out of building and room.

The Prekindergarten Program has a Parent Action Committee. Consider joining us. Your input will benefit your child as well as the whole program. We'll send out more information to you this fall.

PREKINDERGARTEN ATTENDANCE

Children do best when they attend school regularly and are on time. Although occasional absences due to sickness do happen, extensive absences and lateness disrupt your child's learning and the classroom community.

Prekindergarten children are expected to

- Attend school **regularly Monday through Friday**
- Be in the classroom **on time**

If your child is absent, you must call the school each day that your child is absent.

When your child returns to school, you are required to send a note to the school confirming the reason for your child's absence.

When absences extend to three days and contact is not made with the school, the classroom family worker, social worker, or teacher will make a home visit to further understand your concerns and when possible provide support to your family to improve child's attendance. *If attendance problems continue, The Early Childhood Director will contact you and your child may be asked to leave the program.*

If you take a family trip of longer than a week, the prekindergarten program does not guarantee that your child will have a school placement upon your return. If your family needs to make this kind of trip, you should contact Deborah Jordan, at 274-2208.

If your child has a series of repeated late arrivals over a few weeks, the family worker, social worker or teacher will meet with you to further understand your concerns and when possible to provide support for your child to arrive at school on time. *If problems with lateness continue, Deborah Jordan will contact you and your child may be asked to leave the program.*

TRANSPORTATION

If you provide transportation for your own child, you or a responsible adult must accompany your child to the classroom in the morning and meet your child at the classroom in the afternoon. Siblings may not bring children to school or take them home.

BUSES

Most children will be transported by Ithaca City School District bus. In some instances when children are not attending their "home school", families may have to provide their own transportation.

In the morning: Children must be dressed and ready. Buses are not allowed to wait. You or a responsible adult **MUST** accompany your child to the bus and make sure that your child is safely on board. Children may be given bus tags for use when coming and going from school. Please be sure these tags are worn on the outside of the child's clothing.

In the afternoon: A parent/guardian or a responsible adult to whom the parent has given written permission **MUST** meet the bus. If an adult is not present when the bus arrives, the child will be taken back to school or to the bus garage and must be picked up by the parent/guardian.

Getting on and Off the Bus Safely: Adults should teach children to stop at the curb both by telling them and doing it themselves. Adults should watch for a signal from the driver before crossing the street in front of the bus. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. For everyone's safety please do not board the bus. Drivers and aides will assist children with seat belts and teach students to eventually buckle independently.

Riding the Bus Safely: Please help keep your children safe by reminding them that they must stay in their bus seats at all times. Eating, sharp objects and medication are not allowed on the bus.

*Note: Staff are not allowed to transport children or parents in their personal vehicles.



BUS HARNESES

Children under four years old must wear a safety harness on the bus. A lap belt is not enough. After their fourth birthday, children can wear a lap belt. Although it's not required by state law, wearing a lap belt helps keep your child in the seat.

The harnesses work in the same way that a car seat does. The straps come over the seat and over each of the child's shoulders. There are loops at the bottom of the straps. The bus seat belt is inserted through these loops, across the child's lap and then fastened into the buckle. (See diagram below.)

The harnesses have adjustable straps that need to be adjusted the first time a child rides in them. Your child should sit in the same harness everyday so the harness does not need to be readjusted.

CHANGES?

Please call transportation if you have any transportation changes at 607-274-2128. The Teachers must also be notified in writing by the parent(s) of any transportation change.

If someone other than a parent is picking up a child, the teacher must have permission in writing from you.

AUTHORIZATION TO PICK-UP IN AN EMERGENCY

Sometimes we may need to reach parents/guardians because children become ill at school, they have an accident, or school closes early. If we can't reach you, then we need the names of people whom you have given permission to contact in this kind of emergency. **Your child will be released only to those people to whom you have given approval and listed with teachers.**

Please keep us informed of any changes in names, addresses, phone numbers, and places of work of those authorized to pick-up your child and for emergency care. This must be done in writing.

HEALTH POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

If there is a problem concerning a student's health, the parent or guardian is encouraged to contact the Health Office. The school nurse will be glad to help in any way possible.

ICSD health policies and health programming are designed to help all our families stay healthy.

IMMUNIZATIONS

New York State and the Ithaca City School District require that all children who attend prekindergarten must have the following immunizations:

| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Diphtheria (DTaP/DTP/Tdap) | 4 doses |
| Polio | 3 doses |
| MMR | 1 dose of Measles, Mumps, Rubella |
| (MMR). Before going to Kindergarten children will need a second dose | |
| Hepatitis B | 3 doses |
| HIB | 1 to 4 doses |
| Varicella | 1 dose |
| Pneumococcal Conjugate | 1 to 4 doses |

IMMUNIZATIONS

Proof of immunization should be sent to the school nurse where your child will be attending.

Proof of immunization must be any 1 of 3 items listed below

- An immunization certificate signed by your healthcare provider
- Immunization Registry report (NYSIIS or CIR from NYC) from your healthcare provider or your county health department.
- A blood test (titer lab report that proves your child is immune to the diseases for Varicella (chickenpox), a note from your healthcare provider (MD, NP, PA) which says your child had the disease is also acceptable.
- **Please note:** Proof of the required immunizations **MUST** be provided for the child to attend school. If a student has not shown proof of immunizations s/he will be **EXCLUDED** from school the following day.
 - A student who lives in New York State at the time of enrollment will be excluded from school after 14 days
 - A student who comes from out of state or another country will be excluded from school after 30 days
- A child may return to school when proof of any missing immunizations has been shown to the school nurse. If a child is missing more than one vaccine in a series then proof of the next appointment must be provided as well. (MD note, appointment card)

PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

The Ithaca City School District follows New York State Education Law regarding physical exams. All students in grades Pre-K, Kindergarten, 2nd, 4th, 7th and 10th grades are required to have a physical exam.

A **DENTAL CERTIFICATE** is requested for new entrants and for students in Pre-K, Kindergarten, 2nd, 4th, 7th and 10th grades.

The ICSD Prekindergarten program must have a record of immunizations and a current physical examination on file before your child can attend the classroom.

You must provide a record of a physical exam done within the past 12 months by a licensed Physician, Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner.

ILLNESS AT SCHOOL AND WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME

The principal and school health personnel must be able to contact a parent or guardian in case of an accident or illness in school. The parent or guardian is responsible for seeing that the ill child gets home safely and needs to have a plan to care for sick children. Therefore, it is essential that parents and guardians make certain the school has the ability to contact them. The school must have the home phone number, work phone numbers, beeper or cell phone numbers, and the names of two relatives, friends, neighbors or co-workers who can act for the parent/guardian in case of emergency.

If your child is ill or has an accident, someone from the school will notify you or your emergency contacts, provide basic first aid, and/or take your child to an emergency room.

Do not send a sick child to school. Children with minor illness will not be excluded from school unless:

- the child has a fever (oral temperature of 100 or greater); students must be fever free for 24 hours
- the illness prevents the child from participating in school activities
- the child requires more care than the school staff can provide
- the child has lethargy, difficulty breathing or signs of serious illness

When your child is ill, it is helpful for you to report his/her diagnosis to the School Nurse. The Ithaca City School District has a policy that prohibits students from attending school with a communicable disease or condition. If you have a question about whether your child can be in school with a specific diagnosis, please contact the Health Office. In the event of serious illness or injury the School Nurse can help coordinate your child's educational needs and plan for a safe and successful re-entry into school.

MEDICATION POLICY

Medications should be given at home when possible.

When it is necessary for students to have medication (prescription or over-the-counter/nonprescription medications) during school hours, the following procedure must be followed:

- A written order must be received from the doctor stating the name of the medication, time to be given, effects of the medication, duration of order and side effects.
- Medication orders must be updated at the beginning of each school year.
- The parent/guardian must send a written, dated request for medication to be given at school or on field trips if appropriate.
- The medication must be in the original container. If it is a prescription, the pharmacist will give you an empty labeled container for school.

The Ithaca City School District policy prohibits students from carrying medications to and from school. A responsible adult must transport all medications.

We do health and language screenings for all children. At screenings we assess children's speech, hearing, vision, teeth and development. If we find out early about areas where children need some extra help, we can help them to avoid problems later. Additional screenings may be provided, but parents will be notified before they are done. We must have your permission to do these screenings and families are informed of all screening results.

Children are encouraged to wash their hands after toileting and before eating or handling food.

