

TO: Parents/Guardians
FROM: Early Childhood Team
RE: Family Handbook

You have been given a Family Handbook which contains information about preschool policies and procedures.

Please take the time to read this handbook and familiarize yourself with it.

Please sign below and return the bottom portion of this page to your child's teacher.

(Please cut here)

I have received a copy of the Family Handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Griswold Public Schools

Integrated Preschool Program

Family Handbook of Policies and Procedures



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Transportation

Children with special needs are offered transportation by Griswold Public Schools. If your child is to be transported by the bus, you will receive a telephone call notifying you of the approximate time your child will be picked up and dropped off. If your child is going to be absent, it is your responsibility to call the bus company at 376-2860. The a.m. session is 9:00-11:30. The p.m. session is 12:30-3:00.

Hours of Operation

Griswold Integrated Preschool is in operation for the entire school year typically September to June. The AM session is 2.5 hours and the PM session is 2.5 hours. Days/Times are reviewed and determined each year, typically a variety of 2, 4 or 5 day slots. Typically three year olds are provided 2 sessions per week and four/five year olds are provided 4 sessions per week. Families that apply and are accepted as part of the School Readiness Grant are granted 5 sessions per week.

Supplies

Many of the supplies used in the classrooms are consumable and need to be restocked on a regular basis. Teachers will ask parents to donate items throughout the year by wish list. Classrooms need the following supplies:

- flour,
- salt,
- oil,
- cream of tartar (used to make Play-Doh weekly)
- pasta products (for sensory tables and art)

Transition From Preschool To Kindergarten for Children Receiving Special Education

When your child is ready to transition to a kindergarten-aged program at age five, you will be involved in a transition plan to ensure that your child's needs will continue to be met. Some children will be able to transition simply into regular kindergarten. Others may require additional assessment to determine the most appropriate program. A timeline of the general transition plan is described below.

A referral PPT for those children who may possibly need further assessments to plan next year's program occurs. This meeting includes pertinent team members. If the team recommends further testing, the appropriate paperwork is complete, which must be signed by the parents before testing can begin. Necessary tests will be approved at the PPT meeting. Test results will be reported at a follow-up PPT meeting. If the PPT agrees that special education is warranted, an annual PPT is scheduled to develop an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan). If results indicate no need for services, the process is ended and your child will participate in the regular education Kindergarten transition.

Summer School

Eligibility for the summer school program is determined by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) after observing demonstrated regression on the part of the child, over vacations and school breaks. Summer school services are designed to foster skill maintenance over the long summer break. If your child is determined eligible for summer school, he/she will be transported to the program. You will be notified of beginning and ending dates and session times when the regular Preschool session is ended in June. During summer school, the staff will work on maintaining the skills your child has learned during the school year.

Section I – Guiding Philosophy

Introduction

Welcome to Griswold Public Schools. This handbook is part of our ongoing efforts to facilitate open communication between home and school. It should provide parents and other caregivers with some basic information about the program your child is attending. Of course, if you have any questions not covered in this handbook, please ask the staff. Not only will you have your question answered, but you will be providing necessary feedback for improvements in this handbook. You will also receive an orientation packet containing specific class schedules or forms that will need to be filled out prior to your child starting school. Please sign the Family Handbook Agreement and return to school.

Program Description

The Griswold Preschool is an accredited program through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. NAEYC is the nation's largest organization of early childhood professionals. Accredited programs have demonstrated a commitment to providing a high quality program for young children and their families.

The Integrated Preschool Program is designed to provide quality preschool programming, as well as special education services, to our three and four-year-old children in Griswold who are eligible. The programs are designed as integrated special education programs. The program strives to meet the individual needs of each child participating. The Integrated preschool program employs a team approach to education and provides professional development each year to maintain quality standards. All new staff attend initial training in curriculum, leadership, assessment, diversity and special needs. Ongoing training in early childhood education and special education is conducted each year thereafter. The Early Childhood Team meets weekly to coordinate the services and plan for the needs of the children in the program. In addition to the four classroom

teachers and instructional assistants, the team consists of the following other professionals:

Speech and Language Pathologist - assesses, diagnoses and treats speech disorders (articulation, fluency, voice) and language disorders and/or delays (form, content, use of words to convey thoughts and wants/needs). Service is provided within the classroom, with peer models to facilitate skill development.

Teacher of the Hearing Impaired - provides assessment and service of verbal and/or manual communication, as well as monitoring and maintenance of hearing aids and F.M. systems. Middle ear and hearing screenings for all students in the preschool program are provided.

School Social Worker - coordinates referrals from all outside sources to the Griswold Integrated Preschool Program, acts as a liaison between home and school and provides information and referrals to support services.

School Psychologist - assesses through direct observation cognitive development of special needs children, provides psychological evaluation as determined by PPT, provides consultative services to classroom teachers regarding intervention strategies and behavior management and collaborates with outside agencies and professionals as appropriate.

Occupational Therapist – assesses, diagnoses and treats disorders of sensory integration and fine motor skills and serves as a consultant.

Physical Therapist - assesses, diagnoses and treats disorders of gross motor skills (running, walking) as well as those skills involving balance, and serves as a consultant.

Nurse - maintains health records, is available for first aid needs, and consults with outside medical professionals. The nurse functions as a medical consultant to the preschool and provides staff training and family communication to meet the health needs of children attending

programs such as, Adult Education, Job Training, English as a Second Language and Public Library.

Transition to Kindergarten Regular Education Students

Preschool students will have the opportunity to be involved in a variety of experiences to ease the transition to kindergarten. Preschool and kindergarten teachers work together to create programs that will build upon each other. Teachers meet frequently throughout the year to plan programs for children. The school will offer parent meetings, children's visits, and orientation all with the goal of making transition to kindergarten informative and enjoyable.

All academic/program records are shared and transferred to kindergarten.

Special Education Procedures & Eligibility

Children requiring special education services are often referred to our Early Childhood Team either by a pediatrician, parent, teacher or one of several Early Intervention Programs such as the Birth to Three Program. A Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting is held to determine the need for evaluations and to review observations/evaluations. Once the team, which includes the child's family, determines that your child meets the eligibility requirements for special education, a determination for the amount and type of services required will be decided. If the team decides that placement in the Integrated Preschool Program would meet your child's needs, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed to address any areas of need through goals and objectives. The IEP will also describe the number of days your child will attend based on your child's level of need. The goals and objectives will be reviewed at least annually at a PPT meeting.

Families of children who are receiving special education services are guaranteed specific rights which are described in detail in a pamphlet, Procedural Safeguards of Children in Special Education, which you will receive at each PPT meeting. Notify the Special Education Office at 376-7650 if you do not receive the pamphlet. Students may be referred to the Planning and Placement Team by anyone who has concerns about developmental, educational or behavioral issues for that student.

and home-based services through a Head Start home visitor. The visitor also spends some time with the child in the classroom. The home visitor acts as a liaison between home and school, helping to foster a positive relationship between parents and teachers. Families are eligible for this program through income guidelines or child need.

Parent Coffee Break

A playgroup meets for parents of children 3 years old who are not already enrolled in a program. It is designed for parents to meet other parents of preschoolers, to discuss parenting issues and to feel comfortable in the school environment. While the parents meet, the children attend a preschool classroom. Parents must attend the Coffee Break in order for a child to attend playgroup. In an effort to increase the understanding of the Preschool's philosophy, the goal of the parent support group is to facilitate acceptance of diversity. Speakers address various topics such as speech and language development, literacy for preschoolers, social-emotional development, etc. Most importantly, the group offers support, advice, guidance and friendship.

School Readiness Grant

The State of Connecticut supports eleven preschool slots at the Griswold Preschool through School Readiness Grant funding. These eleven slots offer a Monday through Friday a.m./half day program. The goal of this grant is to promote quality preschool education for children within the town of Griswold. The Readiness Coordinator works within the Griswold Preschool and community programs to ensure the commitment to standards in the areas of curriculum, parent involvement, collaboration, nutrition, health safety , kindergarten transition, family literacy, and equal access.

Parents are encouraged to participate in various interactive literacy events such as, Story time at Slater Public Library, 211 Info Line workshops/trainings and GES literacy events. And parents are supported by the team by offering referral information to community

the program.

Program Philosophy

We believe that children need to develop socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically to be successful learners. The program is designed to develop students' competence in developmentally appropriate areas through play and active participation in a safe and orderly environment. Language experiences include: verbal expression, vocabulary use and comprehension, manipulating objects, and talking about actions and experiences. The language-based classroom promotes independence, self-esteem and the joy of learning life long skills. Children learn in environments which encourage and support diversity by cooperating with others and being aware and respectful of differences. Collaboration and communication with families enhance each child's growth and development.

Program Goals

- I. To promote growth in the following skill areas: fine and gross motor, cognitive, social-emotional, self-help and communication.
- II. To meet children's needs at their developmental level within chronologically age-appropriate activities.
- III. To foster relationships which promote friendship and understanding of human differences.
- IV. To provide opportunities for children to learn through active exploration and child directed choices.
- V. To facilitate specific skill development through play.
- VI. To provide resources for families as needed and maintain open communication between home and school.

These goals are addressed through a large variety of active learning, small group and individual activities which are designed to foster success and independence. Each activity is designed with various developmental levels in mind to ensure the successful participation of each child.

Program Evaluation

Griswold Integrated Preschool is evaluated each year through the (CSDE) School Readiness Preschool Program evaluation and the NAEYC annual reporting procedures. In addition to these formal tools, collection of information from a variety of sources is utilized as part of a reflection process.

Curriculum

The Integrated Preschool program is a language-based program which uses an interest center approach, designed to foster initiative and independence as well as socialization, language, readiness skills and motor development. The environment, combined with specific activities, encourages active participation in order to promote age appropriate skill development. The Preschool curriculum is based on curriculum standards outlined in the Connecticut Frameworks for Preschool Education. The Preschool Assessment Frameworks (PAF) is used to assess children based on the Preschool Curriculum Frameworks (PCF). The PCF and PAF are used for the complete cycle of intentional teaching.

Using the PCF, skills are taught to children through a play based approach that is vital to a child's overall healthy development. Play teaches children about symbols, solving conflict, and turn taking. Not all children develop these skills naturally. Therefore, an important aspect of Preschool curriculum facilitates growth in the area of play skills.

The following information outlines the key play areas in the classroom and illustrates the readiness skills that may be acquired in these play areas.

conferences, and notices which are sent home with your child.

Due to the amount of written communication being sent home, it is important that you check your child's bag or backpack each day.

Please read our newsletters and postings in our entryway for valuable information regarding parent education, literacy, GED programs, community programs.

How can I participate in my child's preschool experience?

Family Conferences & Progress Reports

Families are encouraged to share cultural and ethnic information with teachers to help promote diversity and understanding. Family conferences are made available at least one time each year for all children. Every effort will be made to schedule a conference at times convenient for families. At these meetings your child's progress will be reviewed. The Connecticut Curriculum & Frameworks Assessment Tool is used to structure observations throughout the year to monitor your child's development. The progress reports include information about various areas of development including readiness skills, socialization, behavior and motor skills. A conference can be scheduled at any time if you have concerns. Parents will also be asked to participate in conferences throughout the year if your child requires any intervention. All information shared by families is held in the strictest confidentiality by all classroom staff.

Section III - Other

Head Start Collaborative

The Head Start Collaborative is a program that was initiated at GES approximately 18 years ago. The Griswold preschool team works collaboratively with TVCCA Head Start to provide family supports

Vision & hearing screenings are provided at the community screening day and as needed during the school year. Dental screenings are provided in collaboration with UCFS.

Emergency Closings and Early Dismissals

Listen to your radio, station WICH or WTCY, for school closings, or early dismissals. The Connecticut news stations on television also broadcast this information. If school is delayed, there will be no a.m. session, but the p.m. will run at the usual time. When there is an early dismissal, the a.m. children are dismissed at the regular time and the p.m. session is canceled.

In addition to the posted messages on radio and television, the Griswold Public Schools utilizes a telephone messaging service called Connect-ED to personally communicate with parents and staff about emergency situations, school events and important issues impacting the students. On days when school is to be canceled or delayed, you will receive a morning call at the primary home phone number that is on file at the school. Our website will also have the school cancellation status posted.

How will I communicate with my child's teacher?

Family Communication

The Griswold preschool has an open-door policy. While parents are encouraged to visit, we ask that parents report to the office to comply with school safety policies. It is important that families and teachers participate in ongoing communication. The program encourages families to visit and participate. Scheduled opportunities for family volunteers are made available throughout the year. The program utilizes several methods of communication so that information will be made available to all families. The classroom teacher maintains contact with families through an Open House in September, home visits are scheduled, notes, phone calls,

Play Space Key Experiences

Block Area

- talking with others
- choosing materials
- working independently
- expressing feelings
- describing objects, events and relations
- Imitating
- investing and naming attributes
- number concepts
- role playing
- pretend play
- sorting

Book Corner

- having fun with language
- listening and retelling stories
- representing experiences (flannel board)
- associating pictures with real objects
- experiencing privacy
- experiencing quiet, soft, slow activities
- a safe retreat

Dramatic Play Area

- discovering size/shape relations
- comparison and classification
- combining and manipulating materials
- describing objects, events, relations
- representing
- using objects in creative ways
- role playing

Sensory Table

- exploring activity with all senses
- comparing weights/volume
- sensory stimulation of sight, smell, touch, hearing, taste
- exploring various sensory materials
- manipulating play-doh

- using tools

Cooking

- working cooperatively
- developing self-help skills
- completing a task
- developing independence
- developing pride in ones heritage
- learning about nutrition
- problem solving
- math concepts
- creativity
- fine muscle control

Table Toys

- exploring materials
- choosing materials, activities
- using small muscles
- number, size, quality, position concepts
- fitting things together & taking them apart
- learning to locate materials
- identifying shapes and colors
- completing a task
- classification and separation
- acquiring skills with equipment

Outdoors

- social skills
- enhancing self-esteem
- increasing independence
- making decisions
- planning and following through
- problem solving
- reenacting life experiences
- natural science
- large muscle skills
- eye-hand coordination
- improving balance
- increasing spatial awareness

Health Policy

State law requires us to have a completed health form for each child on file the first day of attendance. Proof of immunization must be provided and the child must be in compliance with state requirements.

Immunization records will be reviewed by the school nurse. If a family indicates on the student registration form that the child has no medical insurance, the school nurse informs and assists the family to secure medical insurance.

For the protection of our children and staff, we request that you do not send your child to school with a temperature or in any contagious state. Children who have suffered from a high temperature (over 100), diarrhea or vomiting must be kept home for 24 hours before returning to school.

Children should be kept at home, or will be sent home when not feeling well enough to participate in the day's activities, including outside activities. It is important to keep your child at home when ill to minimize the spread of illness and to restore his/her health. Children should not be in school when they demonstrate the following signs of illness:

- cold with excessive coughing or colored discharge from nose and eyes
- vomiting/diarrhea
- conjunctivitis (pinkeye)
- impetigo
- ear infection
- head lice
- any communicable illness (strep throat, chicken pox, etc.) during the period of contagion.

If your child becomes ill at school, the school nurse will notify you at home or work. If she cannot reach you, someone on the emergency name list will be contacted. **Please keep the emergency names and phone numbers current.**

Attendance Policy

Enrollment in Preschool is at parent discretion. **Once enrolled, however, attendance is not a discretionary matter.** According to the policy of the Griswold Board of Education all Griswold Public School students are expected to be in school except for reasons of illness/injury with written verification, death in family, religious holidays, court appearances, school sponsored activity, college visits, suspension, other exceptional circumstance subject to administrative approval. Parents should carefully review this expectation prior to enrollment. Should they not be willing or able to meet the attendance expectations, then they should consider alternative preschool experiences for their children.

Punctuality to school is also requested. Arriving late to the classroom or being picked up late at dismissal time is disruptive to the classroom activities and to the responsibilities of the staff. Please be punctual.

This policy is important to the development of each child, the integrity of the program, and the formation of life long values on the importance of education and commitment. It should also be noted that we have many children and families interested in our program and wish to maximize our resources for as many students as possible.

If your child is being kept home for illness, or any other reason, please call the school, in accordance with school policy, to report that your child will be absent. Send a note, explaining the nature of the illness, when your child returns to school. Please notify us if any childhood diseases (such as chicken pox) are going through your household so that we and other parents can watch for symptoms in others.

An ongoing monitoring of attendance will take place. Students who accumulate 5 or more absences/tardies that are not excusable under policy will be reviewed. A meeting will be held to discuss necessary changes and possible courses of action. Communication with your child's teacher is encouraged at all times to discuss any issues affecting attendance.

What steps does the preschool staff take if my child is having difficulty with appropriate behavior?

Behavioral Strategies

In order to maintain a safe, nurturing, socially inviting environment, certain standards of behavior are expected. The strategies used in the Integrated Preschool Program are designed to guide and direct children toward acceptable behavior. It is important that children gain inner controls rather than relying on an adult to control them. Teachers use techniques to teach children the consequences of their actions. Some of the positive discipline techniques used are:

Love and Logic – Techniques are utilized as described in Love and Logic Magic for Early Childhood by Jim Fay and Charles Fay.

Anticipate potential problems - The teacher knows that John has difficulty with transitions, so prior to the time for cleanup the teacher reminds him that there are only a few more minutes of playtime.

Focus on the behavior rather than the child - Tell the child specifically what you like or dislike about what he or she is doing. "I like the way you wiped the table." (rather than "You are a good girl for wiping the table.")

Redirect the child's behavior - "Tony, if you want to use crayons, let's get some paper for you to draw on."

Help the children to see the consequences of their behavior - "John and Mary, when you both pulled on the doll's arms, it broke and now nobody can play with it until it is fixed."

Give positive feedback - I like how you shared the toy with Jim.

Explain the choices available - "It is time for a quiet activity; if you do not want to do puzzles then you may get a book and look at it in the book area."

Encourage problem-solving - "Uh-oh, the juice spilled, what do we need to clean it up?"

Brief removal from the group - is used for aggressive, dangerous, or extremely disruptive behavior. The area to which the child is removed could be a "quiet area" - usually visually separated from the group but in the same room, a space physically removed from the play center but within sight (such as a mat on the floor) or the child's seat at the table. This "cooling down" period should be ended as soon as the child's behavior is under control (never more than 3-4 minutes without an attempt to rejoin the group). Follow it with one of the other techniques, such as problem solving, in order to promote generation of the appropriate behavior.

If these techniques repeatedly fail to enable appropriate behavior, children will be referred to the Preschool Team for intervention planning which may include a written Student Intervention Plan or a referral to a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting which will be scheduled to discuss other options and special education eligibility.

Parent Involvement

Parents are invited to participate in the Griswold Elementary School community in a variety of ways.

Parents may volunteer in the classrooms, working with teachers and students. (All volunteers must be processed through the Volunteer Coordinator in the office at GES.) Parents may volunteer to help with material preparation, library tasks, and special projects and activities. This work is arranged through the Volunteer Coordinator, information for this program will be in your child's Orientation Packet.

Outside Play

Growing young children benefit from daily exercise and fresh air therefore outside play is an important part of your child's day. Every effort is made to play outside daily unless the weather is severe. Please make sure your child has warm coats, hats, mittens, pants during fall and winter, jackets, hats or sunscreen in warm weather. All children must wear a sturdy flat shoe or sneaker made for running and climbing. **Heels and open-toed shoes are not permitted.**

Field Trips

The Preschool classroom takes several field trips throughout the year. Field trips are planned to enhance learning. Families are expected to transport and attend field trips with their children. If you are unable to attend the trip with your child you may send another adult with your child (grandparent, aunt, and friend).

Clothing & Personal Belongings

All personal items should be labeled with your child's name. Your child should be dressed in comfortable, easy to fasten play clothes and safe non-skid shoes. Playtime outdoors occurs frequently, therefore dress your child properly for weather conditions. Clothes will get dirty and/or wet due to the large variety of activities, so do not send your child in fancy clothes. Send an extra set of clothes (including socks, underwear) to school, in case of an accident. Children should carry their backpack or bag to school each day. This will allow us to send home any necessary information as well as your child's projects without getting lost or misplaced.

Snacks – Nutrition

The following is the Preschool Nutrition Policy: The Griswold School Readiness Program will seek to provide guidance and direction to families relating to the Health and Nutrition of their children. We will promote policies in our preschool program that encourages healthy food choices.

Practices:

1. Families may purchase milk from the school cafeteria as part of their child's snack.
2. Snacks brought from home must be healthy based on the CACFP guidelines for young children. Families will be provided with lists that outline suggestions for do's and don'ts.
3. If a child does not bring a snack that meets guidelines they will be provided with a healthy alternative and a reminder note sent to parents.
4. Cooking projects in the classroom will support the healthy snack guidelines.
5. Classroom teachers have developed units that focus on healthy choice and overall positive health habits.

You will be asked to provide your child with a healthy snack and drink each day that meets the requirements stated in the policy. Milk may be purchased each day. A list of suggested snack choices will be given out at orientation. Classroom cooking projects will help to educate children about the importance of healthy snacking. Every effort will be made to choose nutritionally sound foods for classroom celebrations. No "sugary" "junk food snacks" are permitted.

In the case of food allergies all necessary changes to classroom snack choices will be modified to ensure the health and safety of the child.

Parents are encouraged to join the school (PTO) Parent Teacher Organization. This is an active group of parents and teachers working together to enrich the educational opportunities for our students.

Parents may join The School Family Partnership Committee, made up of parents, teachers and administration working together on school issues. This committee serves in the capacity of an advisory council to the preschool program.

Children First Griswold and The School Readiness Council offer an opportunity for parents to become involved in policy initiatives and community actions that affect the children of Griswold ages birth to eight.

Section II - Operation

The following section will address some questions you may have about your child's daily experience in preschool.

Enrollment & Admission

Griswold Elementary School seeks and encourages the enrollment of all children in the community from diverse, racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Enrollment procedures are non-discriminatory and confidentiality is maintained in accordance with public school policy. Safeguards protect students and families from invasion of privacy in the collection, maintenance and dissemination of information, and to provide accessibility to recorded information by those entitled thereto.

Parents are encouraged to work toward having children toilet trained prior to entry into preschool. If children have not accomplished this goal by the start of the school year teaching staff and parents will work together to assist the child in becoming toilet trained. The program accepts children whether or not they are toilet trained.

In order to attend the Griswold Integrated Preschool Program children must be in the age range of 3-5 years old and residents of the town of Griswold. The Enrollment and Admissions policy requires children to be screened during the annual Preschool Screening day held each year in the spring and all application paperwork to be completed at that time. Program design and planning for the next school year is dependent on this process and therefore, four year old children who attend this screening are assured a placement for the start of the upcoming school year. Children and families that miss the screening day may be offered entrance into the program later in the school year at specific times; however, it is highly encouraged that all children in the community attend the spring screening. Three year old children are offered placements based upon enrollment numbers and availability. Each child is assigned to a specific classroom and teacher prior to the new school year. Every effort is made to create balanced classrooms and therefore, it will not be possible to make changes in your child's placement.

Enrollment Paperwork

To register your preschool child in the Griswold Public Schools copies of the following are needed:

- Proof of Residency
- Copy of your child's birth certificate
- Copy of your child's social security card

The following forms must be completed and returned to the GES office with the above:

- Griswold Public Schools - Student Registration Form
- Connecticut Early Childhood Health Assessment Record

The Student Registration Form and the yellow Health Assessment Record must be completed and submitted before your child can start school.

Paperwork is reviewed by the school health office and assistance is provided to secure medical insurance or to respond to health questions or issues.

What will my child's day look like?

Daily Schedule

The daily schedule and routines form a basic structure for each day. The schedule offers a balance between active and quiet times, large group, small group and individual activities as well as times which are more teacher-directed and times during which children are encouraged to select their own activities. The consistency of the routines helps the children feel more secure because they quickly learn what comes next. Flexibility is built into the routine, so that special occasions, child-initiated interests and other interruptions are smoothly incorporated into the schedule.

A sample schedule for the half-day program might go as follows:

1. Arrival/Transition/Individual Activities
2. Group "Circle" Time
3. Choice Time (child directed play choices)
4. Cleanup
5. Small Group Activities
6. Snack
7. Quiet Book Time
8. Outside Time
9. Group "Circle" Time
10. Dismissal