



Family Handbook

CEDAR RAPIDS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

Welcome to the Cedar Rapids Community School Early Learning Program. We hope that this will be an exciting and stimulating experience for all of you. The purpose of this booklet is to welcome you and to explain some of our policies and procedures. Please read it carefully and keep it for future reference. If you have any other questions, please feel free to ask the teacher or any other school personnel. We shall do everything we can to help you and your child have a pleasant and rewarding year. We are looking forward to your being a part of the Cedar Rapids Early Learning Preschool.



WHAT IS THE EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM?

The Early Learning Program is a very special early learning opportunity. Eighteen to twenty, 3 and 4 year olds will attend the AM session or the PM session 4 days a week, in a warm supportive atmosphere, with opportunities to explore and interact with materials, adults, and other children. Developmentally appropriate play activities lead to cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth. Field trips expand children's learning experiences. Positive



reinforcement from caring adults and opportunities to take risks, make decisions, and solve problems lead to healthy self-images. This successful early learning experience lays a foundation for continued school success and lifetime problem-solving skills.

PHILOSOPHY

The Early Learning Program is based on the philosophy that:

- All young children can learn and succeed in a warm, supportive, caring atmosphere, with opportunities to explore and interact with materials, adults, and other children.
- Children learn best through developmentally appropriate play activities and will achieve cognitive, motor, social, and emotional growth.
- All children can move toward a healthy self-image through positive reinforcement and opportunities to take risks, make decisions, and solve problems.
- Parents are their children's most important teachers and the strongest influence in their lives. Building a comprehensive program is dependent on the collaborative efforts of home, school, and community agencies.
- Health and well-being are critical to the overall development of the whole child.

A successful early learning experience lays the foundation for continued school success and lifetime problem solving skills.

GOALS

To provide a developmentally appropriate preschool experience for 3 and 4-year-olds the Early Learning Program will:

- Accept children and their families at their individual levels, value their uniqueness and encourage them to progress at their own pace.
- Develop a multi-cultural, non-sexist curriculum and environment.
- Provide a stimulating child-centered environment which recognizes play as a viable means for learning about self, others, and the world.
- Encourage children's learning through play by providing activities which enable children to plan, observe, explore, pretend, question, and evaluate.
- Provide a nurturing environment that fosters:
 - A positive self-image
 - A sense of trust in adults and the environment
 - Self-reliance
 - Self confidence
 - Appreciation of others
- Provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum that promotes cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional growth in an integrated format.
- Provide a balance of:
 - Child and teacher initiated activities
 - Individual and group activities
 - Structured and unstructured play
 - Active and quiet times

GOALS

- Encourage language and literacy development through daily exposure to activities such as stories, poems, field trips, functional uses of print, dramatic play, and dramatization.
- Encourage math and problem-solving skills through manipulation of objects.
- Help each child grow in large and small motor ability.
- Provide health education for children and families which encourages preventive health practices and offers guidelines for understanding growth and development.
- Collaborate with community agencies to meet the unique needs of children and families.
- Provide a home visit which may include:
 - Modeling and reinforcing parenting skills
 - Learning materials
 - Student progress information
 - Counseling
 - Health and community resource information
- Emphasize family participation through:
 - Parenting classes
 - Family activities
 - Volunteerism
 - Parent Planning Committee
- Use evaluation of children's progress and achievement to plan curriculum, meet individual needs, communicate with parents, and evaluate the program's effectiveness.

SNACKS

A snack will be served free, at reduced cost or at full pay depending on your family's income level. **Please be sure your teacher is informed of any allergies.**

Our program is a participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). By participating in this program, it allows us to provide healthy, safe, nutritious snacks to all our students. Cedar Rapids Early Learning Program requires participation in the CACFP program and *does not allow families to bring individual snacks from home for their children.* This is to help ensure the safety of all students as many of our classrooms have more than one dietary food restriction in them.

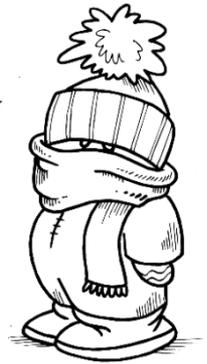
If you would like your child to eat breakfast or lunch, it is made available in the cafeteria before or after preschool. An account is set up for your child to eat and a parent or guardian is expected to accompany the child at all times. These meals are provided through USDA National School Food Program and each school publishes a menu monthly.



CLOTHING

Your preschooler will have active days and do messy activities as part of his/her hands-on learning; therefore, please send your child in every-day play clothes that wash easily and fit comfortably. You may want to send an extra change of clothes to leave at school. We recommend shoes and socks for safe running and jumping rather than sandals, crocs, or dress shoes.

We will go outdoors every day when weather permits. Your child needs winter clothing (hat, socks, mittens, boots, coats, snow pants) each day throughout the winter season. (If you are in need of these items ask the teacher to refer you to agencies which can assist you in finding them.) Please label belongings with your child's name... it helps in returning lost items.



TRANSPORTATION

Daily transportation for your preschool child to and from school is the responsibility of the parent. An adult is expected to walk with your child into the preschool room each day.

This is for the safety and well-being of

your child. You are expected to arrive at the opening time and pick your child up at the ending time each day.

Families not following these guidelines may be asked to remove their preschooler from our program.

If your child rides the school bus, our staff will accompany the children directly to and from the bus to be sure they are kept safe.



COMMUNICATION

Teachers will communicate with parents in several ways. Each classroom will send home weekly newsletters outlining the classroom events, themes, special dates and other important information. Parents will receive a school newsletter monthly.

Teachers will also make phone calls if needed. Please feel free to contact your child's teacher before or after preschool hours or by email. The school and classroom phone numbers are located on the back page of the handbook along with the teacher's email address. Your child's teacher will be available very briefly before preschool begins and after preschool ends.

HOME VISIT/PROGRESS REPORT

A fall home visit will be scheduled with each family to discuss family needs and programming. Two times each year the preschool teacher will provide a written progress report and conferences.

These progress reports are based upon ongoing assessment procedures that will be shared with you. We are always interested in your input regarding your child's development so that we can work together to plan a program that best meets the needs of your child.

PROGRAM STANDARDS

The preschool program adheres to very high standards. The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs Accreditation through an organization called the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS). These standards have over 400 criteria that guide the policies and procedures, the health and nutrition guidelines, the curriculum and teaching qualifications, and the business and accounting practices of the program. The program maintains files with documentation showing how each criterion is being met. Each year an annual report is submitted, and every five years accreditation is renewed.



ANNUAL EVALUATIONS

Each year families are asked to provide information on our programs on a form called a “Family Questionnaire”. We ask you about the policies and procedures of our program. We ask if you feel our program meets the highest quality in children’s programming. We ask if you feel your teaching staff communicates with you frequently and uses information you share with them to guide your children’s learning. Then the program staff uses the information gathered from this questionnaire plus a teaching staff survey to determine goals for the program. These goals are shared with all families as well as the CREL steering board.

DISCIPLINE

Concern and respect for each other is the basis for discipline in the Early Learning Program. Children usually learn to regulate their own behaviors in acceptable ways with the positive guidance of adults. As children grow, they’ll be able to accept more and more responsibility for their behavior. Our behavior management methods teach children to follow directions, accept appropriate consequences, use self-help skills, be a part of a group, take turns, use problem solving techniques such as telling others how you are feeling, and work on solutions together

HEALTH

If your child gets sick or injured at school a health secretary will help him/her in the office clinic. If the illness or injury seems serious you will be contacted immediately, and your child will remain in the clinic until picked up.

The school nurse is available for assistance if necessary. An injury/illness report will be completed for you to sign and take a copy. Your child should not attend school if he/she is ill. Please keep him/her home if there is a fever, vomiting or diarrhea, a skin rash, continuous headache, bad cold with a very runny nose or frequent cough, or any contagious disease.

Please report any illness to your child's teacher so that we post a notice of exposure for the other families.

A notice will be posted when your child has been exposed to a communicable illness. We will share the signs and symptoms of the illness along with other important information regarding the illness. St. Luke's Dental Health Center will follow up to ensure all children receive the dental exam and any treatment needed as well as conduct a dental screening in the classroom during the year. We understand that young children get bumps, bruises, and scrapes as part of growing up. It is important, however, that you tell your child's teacher about any unusual injuries or conditions, as staff members are required by law to report any suspicion that someone may have purposely hurt your child.



EMERGENCY DRILLS

We are required to have periodic fire/evacuation and tornado/ take shelter drills. Each teacher will receive specific instructions, including exit procedures, and these procedures are posted near the classroom door. Due to the need to give and receive emergency directions, children are expected to be quiet, calm, and orderly.

- **Fire Drill/Evacuation**
 - The signal is a high-pitched siren and flashing lights.
- **Tornado/Take Shelter Drill**
 - The signal consists of short intermittent tones.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

In case of an emergency involving children, we need to know who to contact. Families will need to complete the E-Registration on Power School to complete the emergency information.



If there are any changes to this information during the course of the year, please make the updates on Power School. If you are not available we will call the emergency contact information that is on Power School. The emergency contact should be someone other than yourself for us to contact in case of an emergency.

You may authorize as many individuals as you wish in writing. We will not allow your child to leave with an unauthorized person.

PROVISION OF EMERGENCY CARE

School district policy states: School personnel trained in first aid/emergency care techniques may give emergency care or first aid to sick or injured children, staff or visitors whenever these individuals are on school premises or under school supervision. For severe or life-threatening injuries and illnesses, the Emergency Medical System (911) shall be activated and the individuals transferred to an appropriate source of medical care as rapidly as possible.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

If there is an emergency at the Duane Arnold Energy Center that requires school evacuation, parents will have one hour after the evacuation is announced on radio and television to pick up their children at school. Remaining students will be transported by bus to a location designated for each school building.

If there is a major school emergency, the children will be transported to another school or other location depending on the school building's location. Children would need to be picked up at that alternate location.

Children would be released to adults who are listed on the child's emergency card and form. In some cases, identification might be required. It is very important that you let the office know immediately when there are changes on your emergency card.

FAMILY PLANNING COMMITTEES

Each preschool classroom has a planning committee made up of parents interested in making decisions regarding the program.



Teachers will set up times for the committee to meet to decide on special family events as well as other preschool activities. The planning committee will look at the previous year's goals to determine how well those goals are being met. Then the committee will determine if additional goals will need to be set as determined from the current year's questionnaire and surveys.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. The Early Learning Program is a collaborative effort of home, school, and community agencies. Families will receive a regular home visit and newsletters, participate in the classroom and special family activities, and are encouraged to serve on school committees. Parents are always welcome visitors to the Early Learning Program.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

We believe that the family is a vital part of a child's life. There are times when we all experience a financial or emotional crisis. The teacher, and other support staff are available to respond to the special needs of children and their families and as a source of information.

Information about community resources and special events will be provided through newsletters, during home visits and as needed. If you have questions about available community resources, please contact your teacher, building counselor, or building social worker.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Additional support services are available to assist teachers when concerns arise with children or children are on IEPs. These services include building staff (special education teachers, counselor, nurse, health secretary, etc.) and Grant Wood Area Education Agency staff (psychologist, social worker, consultant, speech-language pathologist, occupational and physical therapist, and others). Teachers and families may use input on an informal basis or request formal assistance identifying strategies to address a concern. These services may be available by teacher or parent request through the counselor at the child's school.

SAFETY

Only adults with name badges may move about within the building. All parents, volunteers and other visitors who enter the building between 8:45am and 3:30pm must go immediately to the main office. Parents and visitors must sign in and get a visitor badge to wear while they are in the building. They must return to the office before leaving to sign out and return the badge. All school and district staff will also wear name badges at all times. Any adult seen moving about the building without an appropriate badge will be questioned and directed to the office to sign in and get a badge. School doors will be locked during the school day.

FIELD TRIPS

Parents will be notified of upcoming field trips through newsletters and classroom signs. These notices will specify where the children will be going, how they will be transported, and the time and date of the trip. Teachers will always take a cell phone, first aid bag, and the children's emergency consent information. Children will be transported by District school busses or by parent volunteers. If transported by private vehicle, all drivers will have licenses photocopied and will sign a disclosure statement. Children riding in private vehicles will be placed in proper restraints according to Iowa law.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP

- Review school letters and notes carefully. You will receive a weekly newsletter and monthly calendar.
- Please contact your child's teacher any time you have questions or concerns.
- Please share any information that would help us serve your child better.
- Regular attendance at school is required. If your child is ill or not attending school for any reason, please call the school office between 8:00 AM and 8:30 AM.
- If you move or change your phone number, please contact the school office and your child's teacher and update Power School.
- Please do not allow your child to bring money, toys or other personal items to school unless special items are requested by the teacher.
- If your child brings home an item that does not belong to him/her, please contact the school. Habits of honesty are established early.
- Please check with your child's teacher before sending treats for birthdays other special occasions. To avoid hurt feelings, please do not send party invitations to school.
- To protect your child's papers, please send a roomy tote bag or backpack every day.
- Your participation is important! Please call the school if you are unable to keep any scheduled appointments or volunteer time.

ABSENCES AND TARDINESS

Parents need to call the school office before the beginning of the school day giving the reason for the child's absence. If you do not call, you will receive a phone call at home or at work to find out why your child has been absent. If you bring your child to school after 9:05am, you must go to the office for a special pass before going to the classroom. When possible, please give us advance notice of absences.



ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Iowa Department of Education has amended the Iowa compulsory attendance law regarding attendance for students enrolled in preschool effective July 1, 2013. The law allows school districts to remove from its enrollment a child who is not regularly attending the district's program. The Cedar Rapids Early Learning Preschool program follows the Cedar Rapids Community School District attendance policy.



The Cedar Rapids Community School Districts attendance policy is:

If your child is absent 6 days, a letter will be sent to notify families of the attendance issue. If, after receiving this letter, attendance does not improve, the family will be withdrawn from the program. Special medical problems or health considerations will be considered on an individual basis; however physician documentation may be required.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTS

Pursuant to rules of the Iowa Code, licensed school personnel are required, upon having information about suspected child abuse, to make an oral report the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) within 24 hours of obtaining the information. A written report must be made to DHS within 48 hours after the oral report.

Board Regulation 605.2

CITIZEN COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

A complaint is a written and signed statement alleging a violation of Board policy or regulation, a federal/state law or regulation, or allegations of unlawful discrimination. The citizen's complaint process may be used to address citizen complaints regarding action(s) taken by a District employee.

The complainant:

- Should attempt to resolve the complaint informally.
- Should review the complaint procedures/forms from the Superintendent's Office or obtain them from the District web site – www.cr.k12.ia.us.

The District:

- Should attempt to resolve the complaint with the assistance of appropriate personnel.
- Tracks and monitors complaints.
- Follows District complaint procedures.
- Protects complainants from retaliation.

Board Regulation 211.1

WHAT EVERY CHILD NEEDS

Every child needs to feel:

that his family loves, wants, and enjoys him

that there are people near her who care what happens to her

that her family likes her for herself, just the way she is

that his family likes him all the time, not only when he acts according to their ideas of the way a child should act

that her family will let her grow and develop in her own way



Every child needs to know:

that his family will always be on hand and will keep him safe from harm

that she belongs to a family or group: that there is a place where she fits in

that his family has confidence in him and in his ability to do things for himself and by himself

that there are limits to what she is permitted to do and that her family will hold her to these limits



Every child needs to have:

a set of moral standards to live by

grown-ups who show him by example how to get along with others

playtime; to explore, broaden her experiences, expand her imagination, and satisfy her curiosity

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Building Phone Number: _____

Teacher Name: _____

Teacher E-mail Address: _____@cr.k12.ia.us

HOURS OF OPERATION

Drop Off Time: _____

Pick-Up Time: _____

1st Day of Preschool: _____



CONTINUOUS NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

It is the policy of the Cedar Rapids Community School District not to discriminate in educational programs on the basis of race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, gender identity, socioeconomic status, national origin, religion, disability, age (except for permitting/prohibiting students to engage in certain activities) or genetic information and in employment opportunities on the basis of age, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability or genetic information. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact Rod Dooley, Executive Director of Equity, (RDooley@cr.k12.ia.us), and/or Linda Noggle, Executive Director of Talent Management, (LNoggle@cr.k12.ia.us), Educational Leadership and Support Center, 2500 Edgewood Rd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA, (319) 558-2000.