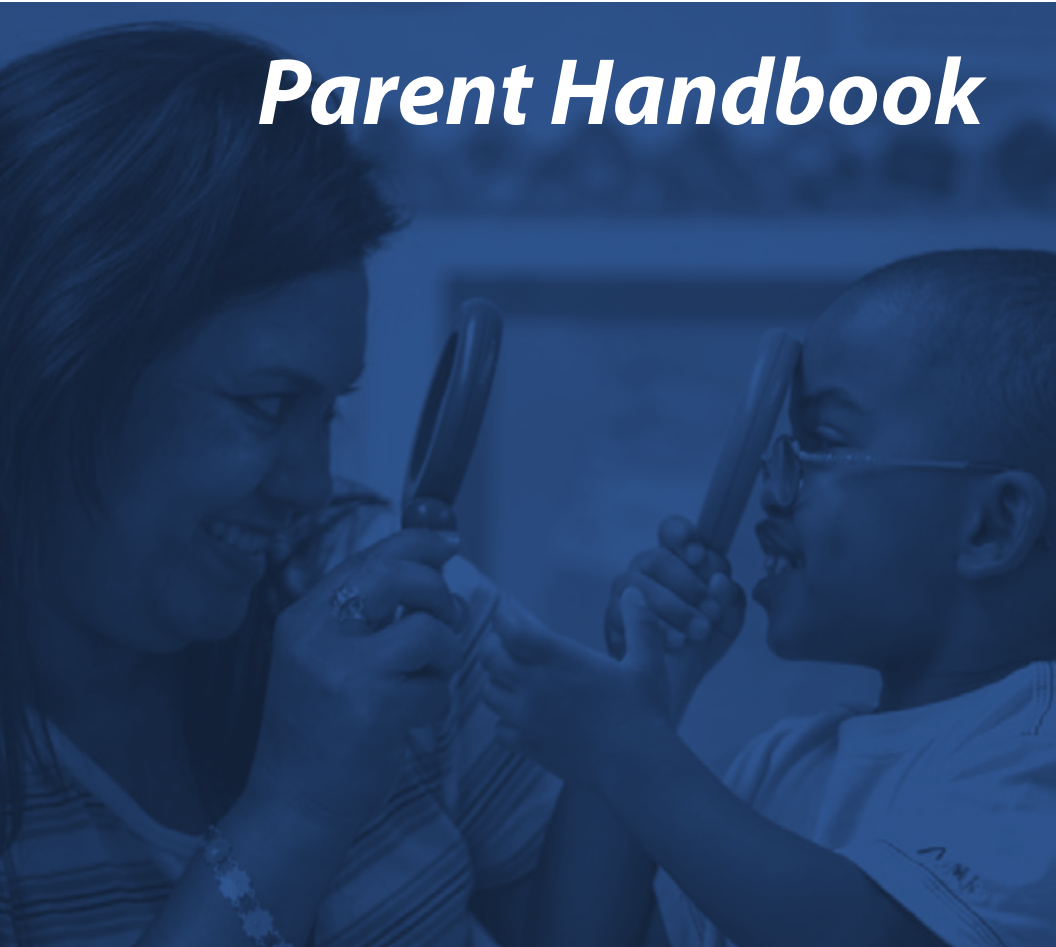




Parent Handbook



Early Childhood Programs



Important School Information

SCHOOL NAME: _____

SCHOOL ADDRESS: _____

SCHOOL OFFICE
PHONE NUMBER: _____

TEACHER NAME: _____

TEACHER'S PHONE NUMBER: _____

TEACHER'S EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

ASSISTANT TEACHER'S NAME: _____

CLASS HOURS: _____

ROOM NUMBER: _____

Department of Health Services

150 North 18th Avenue

Phoenix, Arizona 85207

General and Public Information:

(602) 364-2536



Welcome to Early Childhood Programs offered through Mesa Public Schools! Your child is entering an exciting program of play and active learning that will provide the foundation for success in kindergarten and elementary school. Preschool is a place where young children can make friends, feel safe, learn and have fun! Working together, you and your child's teacher can create a positive and enjoyable preschool experience for your child. This handbook will introduce you to the Early Child Program and provide information to ensure a successful year. If you have additional questions or concerns, please call your child's teacher or the Early Childhood office, and we'll be glad to assist you.

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Mission Statement

The mission of Early Childhood Programs through Mesa Public Schools is to work in partnership with families to provide a learning environment for children that supports overall development and readiness for school. By working together, we can help children acquire the skills, attitudes and habits to do well in school and throughout life.

Description of Programs/ Who we are

Early Childhood Programs through Mesa Public Schools offer each child a positive, developmentally appropriate environment for learning. Programs offered include:

- **Mesa Early Learning Preschool** (MELP)
- **Pre-Kindergarten** (Pre-K)
- **First Things First Pre-K** (FTF)
- **Pre-K Plus**
(preschool plus childcare for a full day experience)

Differences between these programs are based on funding, qualification by income, and length of class sessions. Each program is licensed under the Department of Health Services, and undergoes regular inspections. Reports are available at your individual school site.

We believe families are the first and most important teachers of their children. We support families in nurturing their children.

Curriculum

We believe that healthy minds and bodies are necessary for children to reach their full potential.

Early Childhood programs use *The Creative Curriculum* as the foundation in our classrooms. Other curricula may be used to supplement content areas. The philosophy of *The Creative Curriculum* is to build on children's natural curiosity to develop skills and promote learning. A wide variety of planned experiences allow children to learn through interaction, exploration and discovery. Our programs offer young children support and encouragement as they strive to become confident and competent. Parents and teachers together can enable children to:

- Enjoy reading and writing
- Use language effectively
- Solve math problems
- Be creative
- Make decisions independently
- Develop physical coordination
- Get along with others
- Be self-confident
- Enjoy learning
- Love school

Lesson planning and curriculum are guided by The Arizona Early Learning Standards. Arizona's standards have been developed to provide a framework for the planning of quality learning experiences for all children 3 to 5 years of age. The standards cover a broad range of skill development and provide a useful instructional foundation for children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities. The standards are intended for use by all those who work with young children in any early care and education setting in urban, rural and tribal communities. The standards are available at www.azed.gov/wp-content/uploads/PDF/EarlyLearningStandards.pdf



Assessment

We don't need tests to find out what preschool children know. Tests are not reliable for this age group. Instead, we observe what children do and take notes. Samples of each child's work-drawings, writing, photos of artwork or block buildings-are collected and kept in a portfolio.

Teachers summarize collected information and share it with parents at two distinct times during the school year. We ask what you have seen your child do. Together, we gain a more complete picture of your child's progress. Then we plan together how to support your child's learning.

Daily Schedule

Early Childhood classrooms provide your child with a variety of activities throughout the year. There will be a balance between whole group, small group and individual learning opportunities; indoor and outdoor play, and child-centered and teacher-directed activities. Although the order and times will vary, each early childhood classroom will include many of the following activities in their daily schedule:

- Arrival time
- Breakfast/lunch/snack (depending on program hours)
- Circle time
- Literature
- Music
- Movement
- Work time (individual work in classroom learning areas)
- Clean up
- Small group time
- Outdoor play

You will receive your child's exact daily schedule from their teacher.

District early release days will not change your preschool child's schedule.

We believe the early childhood curriculum must be based on children's interests and must be relevant to their lives and experiences.



Classroom

Early Childhood classrooms are designed for learning and encompass the social emotional, cognitive, language and physical areas of development. Children have many opportunities to make choices, come up with ideas, experiment, and take responsibility for their work. Materials that are appropriate for 3, 4, and 5 year olds are available in labeled areas throughout the room. Exciting work areas are designed to support children's learning.

Library Area - Looking at books, being read to and telling stories from the pictures in books help children learn to read, write and love literature.

Dramatic Play and House Area - Pretending and trying out new roles help children make sense of the world around them and learn to interact with others.

Table Toy Area - Puzzles and other table toys encourage children's growth in fine motor skills, thinking skills, matching, classifying and completing tasks.

Art Area - Art provides a way for children to express themselves creatively. Color, texture, size, motor skills and patterning are all learned through the exploration of art materials.

Sand/Water Play Area - As children explore and experiment, they learn about cause and effect, counting and measurement, while developing small muscle control. Working side by side

with other children supports expanding communication and social skills.

Music Area - Rhythmic patterns, language skills and body movements are enhanced through songs and music. Singing and doing finger plays with children allow them to participate cooperatively in a group, recognize rhymes, and enhance listening skills.

Computers - Opportunities to use computer software reinforce basic math, science and reading concepts as well as eye-hand coordination and fine motor skills.

Outdoor Play - Children spend an extended period of time outdoors each day (weather permitting). Climbing equipment, swings, and tricycles help children develop large muscles and support social interactions. Working together in a sandbox, show children how to share a space, communicate ideas, and explore the properties of natural materials.



Discipline

Teachers help children develop self-control by using positive discipline techniques in the classroom. To help children develop healthy self-esteem and the ability to make wise choices, we use the following discipline strategies:

- setting and clearly communicating limits and expectations
- modeling and encouraging positive behavior
- redirecting children to appropriate activities
- providing a variety of acceptable options and choices
- focusing on logical consequences of children's actions
- helping children learn to solve problems and settle conflicts

Persistent harmful, dangerous, unsafe behaviors in the classroom environment will be addressed by staff. Staff will be looking to see a decline in the number of aggressive acts, a reduction in the severity of the aggression and a change in the skills your child uses in the classroom.

We do not take lightly dismissing a child from the program and consider dismissal a serious, last step in the process of working with your child. If a noticeable change does not occur, within two weeks of notice of severe aggressive behavior, staff will discuss a plan for removing your child from the program and give you notice of the final day of attendance.

We believe that children need positive role models to foster social competence, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility.

Program Services

Meals - Children will receive breakfast and/or lunch or a snack in the classroom depending on which program and time of day the program is in session.

Health Screenings - During the year, school district personnel will check the hearing and vision of each preschool child. If any problems are detected, the parent or guardian will be notified so that an appropriate follow-up can take place.

Conference - Parents and Guardians have the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher 2 times a year during conference weeks. Information about the conference schedule will be handed out by your child's teacher.

Parent Education - Mesa Public Schools Parent University workshops are available to Early Childhood Program parents free of charge. These classes, scheduled each semester, offer families the opportunity to learn about parenting skills. Your child's preschool teachers can answer questions about the workshop topics, times and locations or you may access the schedule at www.mpsaz.org/parentu/. Workshops are presented in English and Spanish.

Child Find - Mesa Public Schools offers screening services to determine the special needs of 3 to 5 year-olds in the community. If you are concerned about your child's progress or development, call (480) 472-0703 to schedule a screening appointment.

Transportation - Parents are responsible to provide transportation daily to and from school.





Family Activities

Communication between parents and teachers is essential to children's school success. Parents are welcome in preschool classrooms at any time during class hours. Families are highly encouraged to share special family celebrations, traditions and interests with preschool children and teachers. Your child's teachers will provide additional information about ways parents can participate in early childhood classrooms.

Open House - Families and preschoolers will have the opportunity to meet teachers and visit classrooms before school is in session. This get-acquainted visit helps reduce the separation anxiety many children feel on the first day of school.

Field Trips - Field trips are an important part of your child's learning and will be available if funding allows. Parents are encouraged to join the class on field trips during the year. These active learning experiences provide opportunities for families, students and staff to explore learning in the community together.

Family Literacy Night/Week of Young Child - One special week during the school year, each April, will be devoted to fun, hands-on, and entertaining activities for you to enjoy with your child. It is a week of celebration in honor of the young children who attend early childhood programs. Your child's teacher will distribute information regarding times, locations, and activities scheduled.

We believe that cooperative partnerships between the home, school and community will enhance the growth and development of children and families.

Yearly Calendar

Early Childhood programs follow the same calendar as Mesa Public Schools for holiday closure. The early release schedule for K-12 does not apply to preschool. Early Childhood programs' schedule does not change on early release days. You should expect changes to the regular schedule during conference weeks and during the week prior to winter break. To see the Mesa Public Schools academic calendar please visit www.mpsaz.org/students/calendars.

Attendance Policies

A daily sign-in, sign out notebook is located in each preschool classroom. Each child attending an early childhood program must be signed in and out by a responsible adult each day. This can be the parent, guardian, relative over 18 years of age, or other adult designated on the emergency card. Any changes must be submitted in writing. When signing in and out, a first initial and full last-name signature is required by Department of Health Services.

In the event of an emergency situation, parents may phone the teacher or school office to authorize an adult other than those on file to drop off or pick up their child. The teacher or office staff will verify the identification of the parent through information contained in the child's file.

Anyone picking up a child must show proper photo identification before the child will be released to them.

Names of people specifically prohibited from picking up a child should be kept in the student file. Court orders are required in cases of parental custody disputes.



Reporting Absences - Please call your child's teacher if your child will not be in class. If a child is absent more than three consecutive days, and no one has called the teacher, the family will be contacted. Our preschools have a waiting list. If your child is unable to attend consistently, it is important to let us know so that the vacancy can be filled. After ten unexcused absences, your child will be removed from the program.

In tuition-based early childhood programs-failure to pay your child's tuition may result in being dropped from the program.

Daily Arrival at School - Please bring your child to school on time, not early and not late. Teachers are not available to supervise children left before class hours.

Dismissal Time - Please be on time to pick up your child at the end of the day. Preschoolers become very anxious if someone is not there to pick them up on time. Teachers are not available to supervise children after dismissal time. Chronic or consistent late pickup will result in your child's removal from the program.

Early Childhood Programs Late Pick-up Policy - It is important that all children be picked up no later than 5 minutes after class dismissal. Late pick-up fees will be assessed at the rate of \$25.00 for the first 1-15 minutes late and \$25.00 for each additional 15 minutes late.

If you are going to be late, please make arrangements for an alternate person listed on the emergency card to pick up your child.

Routines are essential to young children and make children feel more secure and comfortable. Children arriving late and leaving early disrupt the classroom routine and is unfair to your child and the other children. Please be courteous to the children and teacher by dropping-off and picking-up on time.

We believe that an early childhood program must focus on children's overall well-being by including activities to support their social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development.

Healthy and Safety Guidelines

We believe children learn best through active involvement, with many opportunities for choice, exploration and problem solving.

Emergency/Accident Procedure- In case of minor injuries, your child will be treated by school staff and you will be informed about the injury when you pick up your child. All teachers and assistants are CPR and First Aid Certified.

In the case of more serious injuries, first aid will be administered, and the parent or guardian will be notified by telephone to pick up the child for further care. If the parent or guardian cannot be located, a person listed on the emergency card will be called to take the child for further care.

In case of a school wide emergency such as a lockdown, fire drill, or relocation, each class will follow the specific plan designated and practiced by your child's school.

Medication - School district policies on administering medications will be followed. Medications will only be administered by the school nursing staff.

Illness -Your child should be kept home if he or she has any of the following symptoms:

- Temperature above 100 degrees
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- A respiratory infection that causes him or her to cough constantly or to have yellow, brown or green discharge from the nose
- Lice or nits until appropriately treated
- Contagious diseases such as chicken pox

A child must remain at home for at least 24 hours if being treated with an antibiotic for illnesses such as strep throat, ear infections, sinusitis or bronchitis.

Your child may return to school when he or she is fever free for 24 hours without Tylenol or Ibuprofen.



Should your child become ill at school, we will call you to take him or her home. Please be sure that your emergency card is up to date and that we have a working phone number so we can contact you in case of an emergency.

Insurance - Mesa Public Schools carries property and casualty liability coverage for each preschool classroom.

The district does not carry insurance for students who are injured at school. You may purchase an optional school-day or 24-hour accident policy through a private agency. More information is available through your school office.

Pesticide Warning - Each preschool site is regularly inspected for pests. Notices are posted when the site will be sprayed. Parents may obtain more information from your school office.

Other Guidelines

Clothing - Please do not send your child to school in his/her best clothes. We encourage rubber-soled enclosed shoes that are safe for running and climbing. Clothing should allow children to play and explore without being concerned about keeping clean. In preschool, we play with glue, paint, sand and water every day! Children should also be able to manage and fasten their clothing by themselves. An extra set of play clothes should be left at school in case of emergencies.

Footwear - Your child will be involved in many different activities each day including outdoor play. For safety reasons we encourage children to wear safe, enclosed shoes such as tennis shoes to school. Flip flops and sandals do not offer much protection from the bikes and wagons that are available.

Your child may wish to bring items from home. Items allowed include:

- Backpacks
- Jacket/sweater
- Water bottles (with water only, no juice or soda please)
- Please label all items with your child's first and last name.

We request that children do not bring candy, gum or personal items from home. Valuable toys or other items may become lost or damaged in a classroom of preschoolers. Toy weapons are not allowed at school at any time.

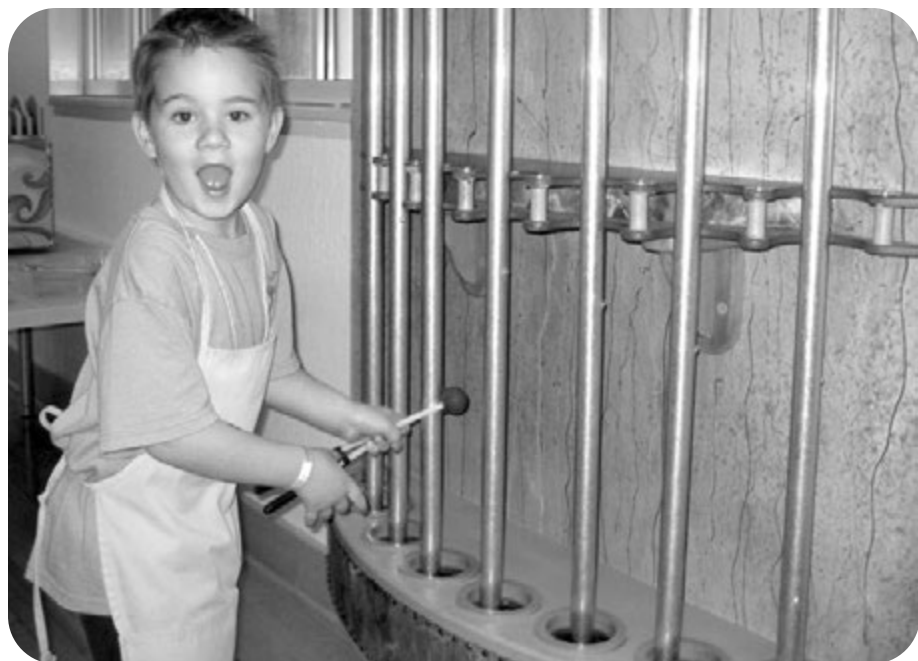




Hygiene - Health and hygiene are important components of our program. One of the most important routines in the preschool classroom is helping children learn to wash their hands with soap before eating, and after using the bathroom, playing outside, or blowing their noses. A hand-washing routine not only limits the spread of germs, but also builds an important lifelong habit. We appreciate your help in teaching and reinforcing this routine when arriving at school and while at home.

Communication - Feel free to discuss any concerns you may have about your child's preschool experience with the teachers. Each teacher's voicemail is active 24 hours a day. If you get voicemail, leave a message and the teacher will get back to you as soon as possible. Please note that while teaching the teacher will not be able to answer the phone but will try and reach you as soon as possible. Let us know of any changes in the family such as death, illness, divorce, separation, company in the home or if the child is on any medication. This helps teachers understand any sudden changes in behavior seen at school.

We believe that a quality program offers children recognition and respect as they endeavor to act on, understand, and expand their world



Ways to Support Your Child's Learning

You can support your child's success in school in the following ways:

- Bring your child to school on time each day.
- Be sure your child has a good night's sleep.
- Be sure your child is well-fed and healthy.
- Dress your child appropriately for play.
- Pick your child up on time each day.

Remember, as parents, you are your child's first and most important teachers. Read to your child every night. Take him to the library. Let her participate in decisions and have responsibilities at home. Spend time each day listening to your child. Encourage him to converse with you.

Please feel free to ask your child's teachers questions about any problems you might be having with your child. The teachers and staff of early childhood programs may be able to help with ideas or resources.

Ways to Support Parent Learning

Staff of early childhood programs encourage you to become knowledgeable about your child's learning and development and to participate fully in the school program by:

- Attending parent workshops
- Communicating with each other and with your preschooler
- Volunteering in your child's classroom activities whenever possible
- Communicating with your child's teacher



Notes



Parent Acknowledgement

After receiving and reading the Early Childhood Programs Parents handbook, please sign and date this page and return it to your child's teacher.

I, _____ ,
(PRINT NAME)

have read and understand the Early Childhood Programs Parent Handbook. I understand that I will be held responsible for any and all policies described within the handbook.

STUDENT'S NAME

SCHOOL

SIGNATURE

DATE

Early Childhood Programs



Early Childhood Programs
www.mpsaz.org/preschool | (480) 472-7250