



Parent Handbook 2023-2024



PHILOSOPHY

The Cary Park District Preschool recognizes that children learn best through play. We see each child as a whole person, whose growth occurs in the developmental stages that are uniquely individual and continuous. Our curriculum and instructional strategies are based on developmentally appropriate practices for young children. These strategies provide a balance of child-initiated and teacher-directed activities which enhance physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development, building confidence, creativity, and a love for learning.

PRESCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

General email: preschool@carypark.com

Preschool phone: 847-639-7448

Preschool Director:

Nancy Herbster, nherbster@carypark.com or 847-639-7448, ext. 0

Program Manager:

Courtney Fejedelem, cfejedelem@carypark.com or 847-639-6100, ext. 118

Classroom phone extensions (847-639-7448):

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|--------|------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| Ext. 1 | 4's T/W/TH | Mrs. Ahlquist & Mrs. Woods | Red Room |
| Ext. 2 | 4's M-TH | Mrs. Herbster & Mrs. Tamason | Teal Room |
| Ext. 3 | 3's M/W/F | Mrs. Carlson & Mrs. Zirbes | Green Room |
| Ext. 3 | 3's T/TH | Mrs. Carlson & Mrs. Zirbes | Green Room |
| Ext. 4 | 4's M-F | Mrs. Nobbe & Mrs. Erdmann | Yellow Room |
| Ext. 5 | 3's T/W/TH | Mrs. Carzoli & Mrs. Valaitis | Blue Room |
| Ext. 5 | Jr. 4's | Mrs. Carzoli & Mrs. Valaitis | Blue Room |

OUR TEACHERS

Our teachers shape the minds and emotions of young children and are passionate about what they do. They are patient, energetic, and engaging. Our teachers provide a nurturing, safe, caring, and structured curriculum for young children to feel loved, safe, and free to learn. Our teachers have obtained college degrees and keep current with trends in early childhood, health, and safety through conferences, seminars, and trainings.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Provide opportunities to explore, play, experiment, and problem solve through teacher-directed and student-initiated activities based on curriculum aligned with Illinois Early Learning Standards.

- Promote a child’s sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a group and community.
- Create a language, math, and science-rich environment that meets the developmental needs of each child social-emotionally, physically, and intellectually through literature, cooperative learning, and dramatic play.
- Establish parent communication through daily communication, conferences, and progress reports that encourage a home-to-school connection through nurturing positive relationships.
- Promote awareness of the larger community with visitors and field trips. Field trips and guest visitors are planned to extend your child’s learning experiences, enhancing their understanding of their environment, their community, themselves, and the world around them through hands-on discovery and exploration.
- Follow the guidelines for kindergarten readiness skills and Illinois Early Learning Standards.

ENROLLMENT REQUIRMENTS

All children enrolled in the program must be completely independent in the bathroom. Teachers can provide verbal guidance to a child but cannot physically assist in any way. Children cannot wear pull-ups to preschool. We realize that bathroom accidents may happen, however, if there is a continual problem, the child’s readiness for the program will be reassessed. Please dress your child in clothes that are easily manipulated for them to use the bathroom independently (avoid overalls, belts, difficult buttons, etc.).

The following Park District forms will need to be completed prior to the first day of school: Emergency Card, Child Information Sheet, Preschool Program Waiver, Payment Plan form, Discipline Guidelines, Home Information Permission, and Release of Child (if needed). These forms are available at the Community Center (255 Briargate Road) or on the Cary Park District website www.carypark.com under FORMS tab then scroll down under Preschool 2023-2024 school year.

Additionally, a copy of the child’s birth certificate will need to be submitted at the time of registration. By October 15, 2023 a completed Health Immunization Form, including up-to-date immunizations will need to be submitted unless it is already on file from the previous school year.

SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

It may take time for children to adjust to new environments. Please be aware that, for some children, hesitation coming to preschool for the first few weeks is typical. Please utilize monthly calendars and updates from the Homeroom App to speak with your child about what will be happening at school each day. Reassure your child that will have fun with new friends and that you will return to pick them up after school. When you say goodbye, the teacher can assist by helping your child find an activity or a friend. Before

you know it, the “adjustment” is over and your child will be excited to come to school every day!

PARENT COMMUNICATION & INVOLVEMENT

We are excited about being a part of your child’s early childhood experience and want to involve you as much as possible. Open communication between parents and teachers can build support and strengthen the learning that happens in the classroom. Teachers will provide a monthly calendar and weekly updates on the Homeroom App that highlight themes and activities happening in the classroom. Parent/Teacher conferences will be held in November and February (by parent request) each year. A progress report will be sent home at the end of the school year.

To promote parent involvement we encourage parent helpers in the 4’s classrooms. This is a volunteer opportunity in which parents are able to help in the classroom. However, if your child does experience separation difficulties, you may consider waiting to volunteer. If a parent/guardian is interested in volunteering as a helper, please speak directly with your child’s teachers.

TAP DAY – TAKE A PEEK

On TAP Day we invite parents/guardians to come into the classroom during drop-off. This will allow you to Take A Peek at what’s happening in your child’s classroom, such as viewing the bulletin board art work, seeing what is in the dramatic play area, and watching your child start their school day routine. While we encourage you to Take A Peek in your child’s classroom, we do need to keep on schedule within the classroom and with our parking lot. Your child’s teacher will let you know which day is your designated TAP Day.

FIELD TRIPS & GUEST VISITORS

Field trips and guest visitors are planned to extend your child’s learning experience through hands on discovery and exploration. These are generally scheduled to be related to the curriculum theme.

Guest visitors are scheduled monthly for both 3’s and 4’s classes. If you have a special talent or are a local professional that would like to share your skills with our preschoolers, please let the teachers know.

Several field trips are scheduled throughout the year for the 4’s classrooms. Permission slips will be distributed prior to each trip and children will ride on a Park District bus. One all-school field trip will be planned in which a parent and child can attend. There is an additional fee for this particular trip and parents are responsible for transporting their child to/from the trip location.

THE ART EXPERIENCE

Our teachers view art as a hands-on experience, focusing on the process not the product. The art experience engages your child's sense of touch, sight and sound, and helps develop their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Through art experiences, your child is encouraged to explore their creativity, imagination, and self-expression, boosting their confidence and emotional well-being. Children's early art creations may not look as they "should" to adults but, please remember that time and creativity were used. Commend your child on the colors or materials they chose or ask how the project was made.

SPECIALTY SNACKS

Each month classes will make a "craft snack" or have a special occasion snack that is supplied by the Preschool. For the safety of all, the Preschool is a "nut aware" facility. These snacks will be included on the classroom monthly calendar. For children with allergies, an allergy action plan as well as a snack approval form will need to be completed.

CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

Turning 3, 4, or 5 is a big deal! Each child's birthday is celebrated in the classroom. Due to multiple allergies, we do not celebrate with treats/food of any kind. Your child will receive a crown and there will be a special birthday song/dance. At a time arranged with your child's teacher, we invite you to come to read a story at the beginning of class time. You can donate a book to our classroom library. Summer birthdays can be celebrated on half birthdays or at the end of the school year.

LUNCH BUNCH

Lunch Bunch will be offered to all morning classes several times during the school year. Lunch Bunch is an opportunity for children to stay at Preschool to eat lunch and play when the regular Preschool day has ended. There will be a separate registration and fee associated with each Lunch Bunch. Registration information will be shared with parents/guardians prior to the scheduled dates. Lunch Bunch is only for children enrolled in the Preschool program.

CLOTHING & PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please dress your child in clothing that is comfortable for active play and will not be ruined by spills/accidents/messy projects. Keep in mind that clothing should be easily manipulated for their independence in the bathroom (avoid overalls, belts, difficult buttons, etc.). Gym shoes or closed-toe shoes are recommended for safety on playground equipment and for indoor play.

Please provide a complete change of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) that will be kept in your child's backpack during the school year.

All classes will go outside if the temperature, including wind chill, is 30 degrees or warmer. The teachers will notify/communicate if the class will be playing in the snow, and in this case please be sure your child is prepared with snow pants, gloves, hats, boots, etc. We encourage independence in dressing to go outside so try to send items so they can easily dress on their own. Children that do not have snow pants will not be able to play in the snow.

Please send a full-size backpack with your child to Preschool. We ask that children leave their personal items and toys at home. Teachers will inform parents when “Show & Tell” and “Color” days are scheduled. On these days children will be able to bring an item from home related to the specific activity. Please use good judgement when helping your child choose an items (no toy weapons, sharp, or breakable objects).

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

The Preschool doors will remain locked except for the specific classroom arrival and departure times. Each classroom will open their exterior classroom door for arrival at the designated class time. Upon arrival, children will hang up their backpack/coat and wash their hands. Each classroom will depart through a designated exterior door.

Children must be dropped-off and picked-up by an authorized individual. Children will not be released to anyone not listed on the Emergency Card or Release of Child forms. Parents/guardians and additional authorized individuals are listed on the Emergency Card. If more individuals need to be included, the parent/guardian will need to complete and submit a Release of Child form. Legal documentation may be required if a parent/guardian is excluded from pick-up. Teachers will ask for an authorized individual to show their picture ID if they are not regularly picking-up the child.

Each family will be provided with two ID CARds. Your ID CARds are colored coded to your child’s classroom and will have your child’s name on the card. We ask that you hold up the ID CARd when in line to assist in a safe, efficient pick up process. Pick up will take place out the front door of the preschool building or out your child’s classroom door. Please form a line outside the door on the sidewalk (not in the parking lot) and hold up your Parent Pick Up ID CARd. We will dismiss students one at a time.

Due to the nature of the Preschool parking lot, classes have staggered start and end times. It is important to arrive and depart in timely fashion according to your child’s class start/end times to keep parking spaces available and traffic flowing appropriately.

ABSENCE REPORTING & ILLNESS GUIDELINES

If your child will not be attending school due to illness or another reason, please contact the teachers by calling the classroom directly. Messages can be left on classroom phones.

Cary Park District Preschool adheres to strict illness guidelines. If a child becomes ill during the Preschool program, staff will call parent/guardian for immediate pick-up. If a child is experiencing any of the following symptoms, the child should be kept home:

- Fever of 100 degrees or more
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Severe congestion
- Red and watery eyes with crusting or drainage
- Any other contagious illnesses (strep throat, influenza, COVID, RSV, etc.)

If a child is kept home due to illness, they must be symptom and fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning to the program. Please report contagious illnesses to the Preschool Director.

LATE PICK UP

It is expected that children are picked-up from Preschool at the designated end time of the class. In the event of a late pick-up, the parent/guardian or authorized individual doing the pick-up will be asked to sign an acknowledgement form and the associated fees will be added to the families' Park District account. Consistent lateness and/or unpaid late pick-up fees will result in removal from the program.

If a child has not be picked-up when class has ended and the teachers have not been contacted by a parent/guardian about being late, staff will do the following:

1. Staff will first attempt to reach the parent/guardian listed on the Emergency Card by phone.
2. If unable to contact a parent/guardian, staff will call authorized pick-up individuals listed on the Emergency Card to pick-up the child.
3. In the event the parent/guardian is unobtainable and authorized pick-up individuals are not able to pick-up the child, police will be notified.

Late pick-up fees are as follows: \$5.00 for the first five minutes and an additional \$1.00 per minute until the child is picked up.

SCHOOL CLOSING

Cary Park District Preschool follows District 26 school closures. In the event there is no school, the Preschool program will not be held. Closing information will be reported by teachers through the Homeroom app and on the "Rainout Line" section on the park district website, www.carypark.com. Please consider signing up for alerts from Rainout Line for the Preschool as we will use it for school closings or emergency communications.

SAFETY

The Cary Park District Preschool has procedures in place to ensure a safe environment. The Preschool doors will remain locked except for the specific classroom arrival and departure times. Preschool visitors are by appointment only.

Fire, tornado, lockdown, and evacuation drills are practiced to ensure your child is aware of what to do in case of an emergency. In the event of an evacuation from the Cary Park District Preschool facility, the Park District will coordinate emergency transportation from the evacuation staging area at 700 W. Main St. to the Cary Park District Community Center at 255 Briargate Rd. for parent/guardian pick-up.

Teachers attend an annual safety training through the Park District and have First Aid/CPR/AED training and certification. District policies and procedures on crisis and emergency preparedness have been clearly communicated with staff.

TUITION & PAYMENT POLICIES

Tuition is based on the nine-month school year and divided into equal payments that are due on the 1st of each month. The first payment is due on August 1st and regular monthly payments start on October 1st and continue through May 1st. Families with more than one child enrolled during the same school year will receive a 15% sibling discount on the lower tuition payment.

You will have the option to sign up for an Automatic Payment Plan that will charge your credit/debit card or bank account on the 1st of each month. If you do not sign up for the Automatic Payment Plan, you will be responsible for making monthly payments on the 1st of each month. Payments will not be taken by Preschool teachers or at the Preschool facility.

Please keep your account current. If payment is not received by the 6th of each month, your account will be charged a \$20.00 late fee. Additionally, if your account becomes 30 days late, your child will be withdrawn from the Preschool program. The past due amount and the current tuition payment will need to be paid before your child can return to the program. Please note that your account must be up-to-date by May 10, 2024 to participate in the end of year Preschool events (graduation, all school picnic).

Registration for additional Park District programs will not be accepted if you carry a balance on your family account. Any returned checks due to non-sufficient funds will be assessed a \$35.00 fee. Credits/refunds will not be given for missed days due to illness, vacation, suspension/removal from the program, emergency school closings, or for other circumstances that would cause a child to miss school.

Payments can be made in the following ways:

1. Complete the Payment Plan form and automatic payments will be charged on the 1st of each month from the designated credit/debit card or ECP (electronic check payment).
2. Log into your Cary Park District account and make the payment online.
 - a. Accounts can be created by going to www.carypark.com and clicking “register online” on the top right of the homepage.
3. Call the Community Center at 847-639-6100 and provide a credit card over the phone.
4. Drop off or place in the drop box at the Community Center (255 Briargate Rd.). Cash payments should be brought to the front desk for a receipt.

Questions about billing, payments, or withdrawal requests should be directed to Courtney Fejedelem at 847-639-6100 extension 118 or cfejedelem@carypark.com.

SUPPLY & KEEPSAKE FEES

New for the 2023-2024 school year - instead of requesting parents/guardians to bring general use school supplies (markers, glue sticks, tissue, paper towels) we will be adding a supply fee to each family’s account. The supply fee will allow the Preschool to purchase the supplies in bulk and to be sure the correct supplies are purchased (for example, washable markers as opposed to regular markers).

As the school year starts, your child will embark on a journey of learning, friendships, and fun experiences. During the year, we will save some of your child’s artwork, as well as take pictures to capture their experiences. We will create a much-loved Keepsake book to present to you at the end of the school year. There is a fee associated to help cover the cost of the Keepsake.

The following supply/Keepsake fees will be added to your family account on October 1st:

- Two & three day classes = \$50
- Four & five day classes = \$60

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

Although the Cary Park District recognizes that misbehavior is part of a child’s developmental process, behavior guidelines and expectations are put in place to address more severe and/or continuous behavior difficulties. The primary goal of the behavior expectations is to provide a safe and respectful environment for the children, staff, and parents/guardians.

PRESCHOOL RULES:

- Be Safe
- Be Neat
- Be Kind

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS:

- Show respect to staff, other children, property, equipment, and facilities
- Take direction from staff and show cooperation with group activities/daily schedule
- Refrain from teasing and unkind behaviors
- Refrain from deliberately causing harm to others by displaying physically aggressive behaviors
- May not leave the program area (whether indoors or outdoors) without permission

A caring and positive approach will be used in regard to discipline. Preschool teachers will try to accomplish this through:

- Establishing simple and understandable rules/expectations
 - We do not hurt ourselves, others, etc.
- Redirecting the child
- Providing motivation and using positive reinforcements
- Encouraging children to “use their words” to resolve conflict

Preschool Teachers will work closely with parents/guardians and the Preschool Director to work towards positive and safe behavior within the program. If the child’s behavior continues to be inappropriate, consistently disruptive and/or dangerous, the child may be removed from the program.

*Cary Park District reserves the right to immediately suspend or remove any participant whose actions are seen as severe and/or detrimental to the Preschool program. Each situation will be evaluated on its own merit. **Refunds or credits will not be issued for suspensions or removal from the program.***

PHOTOS & VIDEO

Photos and video footage are periodically taken of participants in a program, during a special event, or in the Park District’s parks and facilities. Please be aware that by registering for Park District programs and activities or by using the Park District’s parks and facilities you agree that any photograph or video taken by the Park District may be used by the District for promotional purposes including print and electronic media without further permission and without any compensation to you. All photos/videos are property of the Park District.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT

The Cary Park District complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The Park District will make reasonable accommodations in recreation programs to enable participation by an individual with a disability who meets the essential eligibility requirements for that program. Certain requests for accommodation fall outside the scope of the ADA. Specifically, Title II of the ADA includes that public recreation providers are not required to provide individuals with disabilities with personal or individually prescribed devices or to provide services that are personal in nature. If you have questions regarding the Park Districts ADA policy, or

believe you have been unfairly discriminated against in the provision of programs, services, or activities of the Cary Park District, please call Dan Jones at 847-639-6100.

ACCOMODATIONS

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the Preschool Director at the time of registration if their child requires accommodations to participate in the Preschool program. There is space on the Emergency Card to indicate if accommodations are needed for successful participation. Once accommodations are indicated on the Emergency Card the Program Manger will contact the parent/guardian to gather additional information about the child's needs. The Cary Park District works closely with the Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association (NISRA) to provide appropriate supports for a smooth inclusion.

MEDICATION

Program registration forms provide the opportunity for a parent/guardian to note any special accommodations needed, including medication needs of a child. Medication will not be administered during the program by park district staff. If special accommodations are medication related, please contact the Preschool Director prior to the start of the program.



Preschool guidelines may be developed throughout the school year. Parents/guardians will be notified in writing of any such additions or modifications.