

WEST SENECA CENTRAL SCHOOLS



UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
FAMILY HANDBOOK

WELCOME

Thank you for enrolling your child in the West Seneca Central School District's Universal Prekindergarten Program. We would like to welcome you and your child to our program. Our faculty, staff and community partners are looking forward to working with you and your family, as we provide a wonderful year for your preschooler. When home and school work together, great things can happen!

This Family Handbook should be helpful in answering some of your questions about our program. I hope that this will provide you with some basic information regarding the preschool program, as well as some commonly asked questions. If for some reason, you do not find the answer to your question in this handbook, please feel free to contact our office 677-3151 or your child's teacher.

Winchester Potters Elementary - 716-677-3580

Northwood Elementary - 716-677-3640

BrightPath Seneca Street - 716-675-4553

Candy Land Daycare - 716-821-0510

Care A Lot Daycare- 716-668-8290

Great Expectations - 716-771-1962

Just Kids - 716-674-8400

St. John's Community Preschool- 716-668-3584

WEST SENECA CENTRAL SCHOOLS EARLY CHILDHOOD PHILOSOPHY

The West Seneca Central School district believes that the child is the major focus of the early childhood school program.

Each child brings unique experiences, expectations, emotions, attitudes, and abilities to the classroom. It is essential that the individual characteristics of each child be accepted, understood, and nurtured.

Four-year-old children construct their understandings of the world through continuous interaction with their environment. Through spontaneous activity, play and guided experiences children gain confidence in their abilities.

This program is designed to meet the needs of four-year-olds. It is a comprehensive program that is developmentally appropriate and activity oriented. The objective is competent, self-reliant, independent learners.

UPK PROCEDURES

Communication is Key

The most significant factor in your child's success in school is for your child to feel that you are interested and aware of what's going on in school. This will ensure that school is a priority.

Each month a calendar will be distributed with information of upcoming events, activities, and snack duties. Additionally a weekly letter will be provided which will outline our learning for the week and reminders for the following week.

Attendance

Punctuality is a must as tardiness disrupts learning. When your child returns from an absence, please include a note in his/her take home folder explaining the absence. These have to be kept on file. This is true even if you have called the office or have spoken to the school. Please be prompt when picking up your child as teachers have other responsibilities to attend to.

Birthdays and Parties

We welcome birthday treats on or near your child's birthday. Check with your child's teacher for approved treats. Summer birthdays will be celebrated toward the end of the year. We will have sign-up sheets for supplies for our classroom parties.

Sneakers and Clothing

Please have your child wear sneakers every day. We can't allow playground participation or gross motor activities without sneakers. Also, please dress your child in clothing that can get messy without worry. We will be busy exploring and discovering which could lead to getting dirty. The messier we are, the more fun we've had!

Parent Volunteers

We have always encouraged parents who have time to share and help us each day. Our past volunteers have always said how rewarding the experience is!

"No one has yet fully realized the wealth of sympathy, kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure."

Emma Goldman

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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Four year old children construct their understandings of the world through continuous interaction with their environment. Through spontaneous activity, play and guided experiences children gain confidence in their abilities.

The classroom has learning areas or "centers" with sufficient quantities of child accessible books, supplies, and materials. The teacher uses a combination of individual, small and large group instruction to develop early language, literacy, mathematics, and science skills..

Centers include: ART, BLOCK AREA, STORY/QUIET RUG, MANIPULATIVE AREA, SAND/WATER/ SENSORY AREA, MATH, DRAMATIC PLAY, LITERACY, AND MUSIC

Our Day at a Glance

Every UPK daily schedule is slightly different, however here are some key components:

- Arrival - with emphasis on independent skills (hanging jackets/backpacks, removing items from backpack, organizing and putting away materials, check in)
- Meeting/Circle Time/Shared Reading/Music
- Modeled Reading/Read Aloud
- Center Time
- Clean Up
- Small Group
- Snack
- Center Time
- Small Group
- Dismissal - with emphasis on independent skills (putting on jackets, packing backpacks, changing from shoes to boots, zipping backpacks/jackets)

Report Cards

1st report card will go home at the conference in January

2nd report card will go home in June

If at any time you have questions or concerns regarding your student's progress, please contact the teacher.

Benchmark Advanced Curriculum

Throughout the school year, students will participate in kindergarten readiness activities that involve deeper learning and skill building. Prekindergarten uses a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for children who are 3-4 years old. This year, our school district is using a new reading and language arts program, Benchmark Ready to Advance. It's published by Benchmark Education and built specifically for prekindergarten children to meet developmental and academic guidelines.

Each unit of Benchmark Ready to Advance is centered on one topic, such as families and friends, animals, and transportation. Talk with your child each day about what he or she has learned or experienced in school. Ask questions and allow your child to practice conversational skills with you at home. Enclosed is a monthly take-home activity calendar that provides additional activities you can do at home with your child. These activities connect to the unit topic as well as key concepts and skills being taught during the unit. You can use the calendar to read together, to practice skills taught in class, and to engage in collaborative conversations with your child about his or her school experiences.

Home-School Connection

Pre-K Reading Activities

Read to Me

By Jane Yolen

*Read to me riddles and read to me rhymes,
Read to me stories of magical times.
Read to me tales about castles and kings.
Read to me stories of fabulous things.
Read to me pirates and read to me knights,
Read to me dragons and dragon-book fights.
Read to me spaceships and cowboys and then,
When you are finished--please read them again!*

Pre-K Reading Terms to Know:

Concepts of print: Left to right progression, words are made up of letters, spaces separate words, words make up sentences, etc.

Phonological Awareness: Sound structure of language. This progresses from breaking words into syllables, rhyming, beginning sounds (sorting then isolating), blending sounds to form words, segmenting words into separate sounds and lastly manipulating sounds in words.

Phonics: Sounds that are represented by letters which is an end-product of phonological awareness.

Shared Reading: Whole-group reading of songs, poetry, big books, class writing, etc.

Guided Reading: Students reading at their individual instructional level with the support of a teacher. This is usually done one-on-one or with a small group all at the same reading level.

Read Alouds/Modeled Reading: Teacher reads aloud to whole group, thinks aloud, questions, predicts, maps and retells with lots of help from students!

Repetitive Books: Books with few words on a page and one or two words that change from page to page.

Word Study: We'll start with our own names, then our friends' names, environmental print, anchor words (high frequency words that we see in our repetitive books) and "amazing" words that we find in our theme studies.

Reading at Home: When reading repetitive books with only three to four words on a page with your child, please be sure to have him/her try to point to each word as it is read (or at least in the correct direction). In case your child struggles or is fatigued, choose from the following:

Echo Read--you read and your child repeats.

Alternate Read--you read one page, your child reads the next.

Choral Read--both of you read the page at the same time.

Key Chain: Your child will be bringing home a keychain that contains letters to practice naming. We chunk these together in groups of six to make learning them more manageable. Each time your child recognizes the letter, put a star on the card. I'll do the same and when the card is filled with stars, it will be removed from the key chain, stamped and put in the "brain letter" envelope. After practicing and pointing these out in your nightly reading, please bring it back to school so that we can keep adding to it. Once your child can name all uppercase and lowercase letters and has a good grasp of their sounds, we'll add sight words to their keychain.

Poetry & Songs: There will be poems and songs we've learned together during shared reading throughout the week. Please read the poems and songs with your child to reinforce what we've learned in school. Also have your child find letters or words that are recognized.

Sound Jar: We will have a sound that we will focus on so be on the lookout for the Sound Jar in your child's book bag. If your child guesses the contents of the jar it is his/her job to bring it home and put one thing in it that begins with our focus sound. It must come back to school the next day so that he/she can give clues about what is contained inside (it is a good idea to discuss possible clues before coming to school).

Reading at Home:

Every time you read with your child you are building an appreciation of books, reading and time with you. Research shows a child who has been read to at home will often learn to read earlier. Buy books for your child, visit the library, build a reading atmosphere in your home filled with books, magazines, newspapers, etc. Let your child select books based upon interests and select some together. There are great informational books written for little ones, just ask at the library.

When you read with your child:

- Read the title and have your child predict what the book is about. Use clues. This sets a purpose for reading.
- Take a "picture walk" and have your child look at the pictures on each page and talk about what is happening. This helps establish vocabulary and build comprehension.
- Use special voices for characters--have fun acting it out!
- When you're done reading, discuss the content of the book. Help your child retell it.

Pre-K Writing Activities

Pre-K Writing Terms to Know:

Modeled Writing (Writing Together): Children will sometimes help compose a "classroom message". They will occasionally dictate thank you letters and other messages. We will write together about what we learn in our theme studies and sometimes we will write in response to what we read.

Making Books: Pre-K students have the opportunity to become authors every day! Blank books will be provided and children can choose to make a book. We encourage children to think of themselves as authors. Children will share their writing with one another and will converse with teachers and friends while writing. Students will develop through the following stages in order with some overlap, but the length of the stage is determined by the individual child.

Writing Stages:

- o *Drawing and telling the story:* Words are not written, they are in the child's head.
- o *Scribbles:* Pretending to write like a grown up.
- o *Copying:* Being aware of print around them and using it to help them compose.
- o *Random Letters:* dtckrjfwidknfjgmviif, read "We had an ice cream cone for dessert"
- o *Early Invented Spelling:* The child selects letters that represent 1 or 2 of the sounds heard within the words: I lv gd kes reads "I love good cookies."
- o *Full Invented Spelling:* The child uses a letter to represent every sound (or almost) in words: I wnt spgte for dinr reads "I want spaghetti for dinner."
- o *Transitional Spelling:* The child uses conventional spelling for words often seen and uses patterns learned through reading (silent e, double letters, vowel combinations): We wet owtside on the plaegrowd for reeses reads "We went outside on the playground for recess."

Writing at Home:

It is very important that you encourage your children's approximations in writing and assist them at home without writing for them. With that in mind, here are some suggestions to guide you:

When your child says:

You should say:

"I don't know how..."

"Do the best you can..."

"How do you spell...?"

"Say the words slowly and write the sounds you hear"

"What does this say?"
words)

"What do you want the words to say?"(pointing to

"Does this really spell...?"

"It's great kid-writing!"

"Read what I wrote"
picture that
your story to me."

"I see you're writing about (pick out a word or
you recognize), but I'd like you to read



SCISSOR SKILLS

Your child's cutting skills will improve this school year. Your child may progress from holding the scissors correctly to snipping paper to cutting along a line and then cutting out shapes. The muscles in your child's hand need to develop in order to allow your child to open and close scissors and move them along the page for cutting.

Here are some things that you can do at home to help develop your child's scissor skills:

1. Let your child play with squeeze toys or items such as water bottles, squeezing play-dough or water out of a sponge. These are great outside or bathtub activities.



2. Have your child pick up items with tongs or tweezers-most "bug kits" come with plastic tongs that are safe for children to use. They can pick up blocks, cotton balls, & small toys.



3. Let your child cut out of old magazines, clip coupons, or pieces of scrap paper. Thicker paper such as construction paper or file folders are easier for beginners to cut.



How to Hold a Writing Utensil Correctly

1. Put ring and pinky fingers in your palm.
2. Hold a pencil with your thumb, pointer, and middle fingers.
3. Thumb and pointer pinch and rest on middle finger.
4. Relax the wrist so the hand lays on the paper.
5. Use your fingers, not your hand, to draw, write, and color.



You should hold the pencil approximately 1" above the tip of the pencil.