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Growing Together

Preschool

Parent
Handbook
2023–2024

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to School City of Mishawaka's Growing Together Preschool. We are both excited and honored that you have chosen our program for your child. Our purpose is to provide the highest quality early childhood program in a secure, nurturing and stimulating environment. Growing Together Preschool serves the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of the child and their families. We meet these goals with our age-appropriate curriculum, our highly qualified staff and our ongoing communication with parents.

This Parent Handbook has been designed to provide important information that parents need. We expect parents to read this handbook, follow the policies and procedures outlined and provide us with all the required information. Please make sure to review the hand book regularly and keep it for reference throughout the year. Enrollment Forms in the Registration Packet and on the checklist must be completed/ signed and returned to the Preschool Office to complete the registration process in order to comply with State Regulations.

Growing Together Preschool welcomes all children and is committed to providing developmentally appropriate early learning and development experiences that support the full access and participation of each and every child. We believe that each child is unique and work in partnership with families and other professionals involved with the child to provide the support every child needs to reach their full potential.

The teachers at Growing Together Preschool use developmentally appropriate practices and consider the unique needs of all children when planning. Staff will make every attempt to make any adaptations or modifications necessary to meet the needs of the children. Schedules, routines and activities are flexible and the staff will work with therapists, special educators and other professionals to integrate individual accommodations, modifications and strategies into classroom routines and activities. Any adaptations will be reviewed with families and other professionals supporting the child.

All of the dedicated, caring staff at Growing Together Preschool want to be certain that your child has the very best early childhood experience possible. We want to thank you for entrusting us with that privilege and responsibility. We look forward to a positive and productive year where we are able to work in partnership with you to best support our children. We hope you enjoy your experience with us!

Sincerely,

Janice White

Director, Growing Together Preschool

Contact information

Growing Together Preschool

Website: www.mishawakaschools.com

Director: whitej@mishawaka.k12.in.us

Growing Together Preschool

Beiger Elementary School

1600 E. Third St.

Mishawaka, IN 46544

Phone: (574) 254-4711

Growing Together Preschool

LaSalle Elementary School

1511 Milburn Blvd.

Mishawaka, IN 46544

Phone: (574) 254-4800

Mission, Vision, Beliefs

Mission:

Our mission is to provide high-quality, safe, developmentally appropriate and stimulating early education experiences that promote each student's social/emotional, physical and cognitive development to ensure that the students of School City of Mishawaka are prepared for success in school and have a love for lifelong learning.

Vision:

The students of School City of Mishawaka are curious, independent, and have a love of learning that equips them to become contributing members of our community and the world.

Beliefs:

- Children are the most valuable resource in the community.
- High quality early childhood experiences make a difference in establishing lifelong academic and social emotional success.
- Play is mandatory for brain development, developing self-regulation, and advancing language, cognition, and social competence.
- Early childhood education must be developmentally appropriate and individualized. The multi-sensory and hands-on activities must focus on the abilities and needs of the individual child.
- Parents, families, and members of the community at-large are essential in providing a

strong foundation for a child's present and future development over all domains: physical, social, cognitive, and emotional.

- Early childhood professionals must have adequate preparation, and continued professional development to plan and execute developmentally appropriate early childhood experiences for the students in School City of Mishawaka.

Paths to Quality Certification

Growing Together Preschool has recently improved our quality of care, by becoming Level 3 Paths to Quality certified. Programs that voluntarily participate in Paths to Quality demonstrate a commitment to providing high quality care and education for students. Paths to Quality certification ensures that programs are providing safe, nurturing environments, proper adult/student ratios, and an intentionally planned curriculum that supports the young student's social emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

Educational Programming

We utilize the Indiana Early Learning Foundations, inlearninglab.com/collections/early-learning-foundations-guidance which are connected to the Indiana Kindergarten Standards. These Foundations guide the implementation of curricular activities to promote kindergarten readiness for all of our students.

The HighScope Approach

Taken from: The Early Years Count! Education Initiative of the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County.

HighScope is a national leader in the field of early childhood training and research. Founded in 1970, the nonprofit organization is headquartered in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Five basic principles form the framework of the HighScope approach.

Active Learning: Children learn best, say experts in the HighScope approach, "through active involvement with people, materials, events, and ideas."

Active learning is fundamental to the HighScope educational approach. It has five key ingredients:

- **Materials-** A variety of interesting materials are readily accessible to children.
 - **Manipulation-** Children are free to move, handle, explore, and work with the materials.
 - **Choice-** Children have opportunities to set their own goals and select materials, activities, and play partners.
 - **Language from the children-** Children communicate verbally and nonverbally, what they are doing and what they have done.
- Support from adults-** Adults encourage the children's efforts and help them extend or build upon their work by talking with them about what they are doing.

Learning Environment: In the HighScope classroom, every effort is made to create a safe, comfortable, and uncluttered environment where children can play freely, either alone or with friends. Throw rugs, soft chairs and cushions create cozy surfaces. Rooms are filled with light, colors, and textures.

Clearly laid out interest areas are organized around specific kinds of play and are identified with simple names that make sense to children-house area, block area, toy area, book area. Children learn to sort materials by appearance or purpose, arrange them by size, match them by number and so on.

Materials are open-ended, meaning that children can use them in many different ways instead of one "correct" way. Materials such as family photographs and cooking utensils reflect children's everyday lives. Dolls and play figures look like people in the community. The outdoor space is also inviting, with natural plant life, open areas for moving freely and sturdy climbing equipment.

Adult-Child Interaction: Many teachers believe that as long as children are handling materials, they are engaged in active learning. Manipulation of materials is essential, of course, but by itself does not constitute active learning. Adults plan the kinds of experiences children need in order to grow in all areas of development. Children are also most likely to become actively involved in learning and achieve higher levels of social, cognitive, and language functioning when adults form partnerships with them. Adult partners are responsive and interactive rather than directive

and controlling. A give-and-take relationship exists, with children and adults both participating as leaders or followers, teachers or learners, speakers or listeners.

By sharing control of the day's activities, children learn how to take responsibility for themselves and one another; develop confidence in their ability to set the course of their own learning; and practice solving child-size problems in age appropriate ways, knowing there is backup support, if needed. Sharing control does not mean letting children take over and run wild. Adults balance the freedom children need for exploration with the limits necessary to guarantee their safety and well-being and to support their individual mental and social development.

Daily Routine: Each day in a HighScope setting follows a schedule of events called the daily routine. This routine provides consistency and predictability for both children and adults. One regular part of the routine- the daily "plan-do-review" process gives children the opportunity to decide what they intend to do (plan), to follow through on their course of action (do), and then reflect on their experiences with other children and adults (review). Large and small group experiences are also part of the daily routine, along with the fellowship of sharing a snack or meal and the fun of being outdoors.

Curriculum Planning & Assessment: Teachers and other caregivers regularly write notes about children's behaviors, experiences, and interests. Each child's development is then measured on the HighScope Child Observation Record. Experiences that encourage children's growth and development are planned around these careful observations. Teachers also use these notes to help parents better understand their children's development and to make suggestions about how to extend classroom learning at home. To strive for continued high quality, programs can also be evaluated with the HighScope Program Quality Assessment through the Community Foundation's Early Childhood Assessment Project (ECAP).

Thanks to HighScope for Permission to adapt their materials. To learn more, visit highscope.org. To see how the HighScope Kdls (Key Developmental Indicators) align with the Indiana Early Learning

Foundations visit the link under Parent Resources on our website: MishawakaSchools.com/preschool.

HighScope Conflict Resolution Strategy

Teachers are trained on the HighScope Conflict Resolution Strategy that promotes students resolving conflicts independently and without adult assistance. Teachers model and teach students the words to use instead of a natural show of frustrations or outbursts of screaming and crying, or aggression such as hitting or biting. As students begin to recognize what a problem is, they can begin talking to fix the problem until a solution is found. Together the teacher and student(s) talk through and view each problem with equal importance. Teachers become more of a moderator as students learn the process of how to solve conflicts and suggest solutions. This HighScope strategy creates a much calmer environment where students are solving problems as they arise with minimal to no adult assistance.

Encouragement vs. Praise

Encouragement is key to High Scope's approach to child guidance; it implies your faith in the child and communicates your belief in his/her strength and ability. Praise may or may not be encouraging. Praise also has the potential to discourage a child if they fear that next time they may not be able to live up to it. One praises when a job is well done. When a child does poorly, however, they need encouragement much more than when they do well.

Growing Together Preschool also follows School City of Mishawaka's dedication to developing a Growth Mindset in all students and staff. Growth Mindset encourages individuals to keep trying when things are hard and supports the idea that abilities are developed through hard work and dedication.

Assessment

Growing Together Preschool utilizes the COR Advantage assessment tool for all preschool students. COR advantage assesses early childhood development from infancy through kindergarten in eight content areas, which are related to the eight content areas in the HighScope curriculum: Approaches to Learning; Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development and Health; Language, Literacy,

and Communication; Mathematics; Creative Arts; Science and Technology; and Social Studies. Each content area comprises items that address key concepts in early learning, for a total of 34 items. These content areas are in correlation with the Early Learning Foundations. Based on objective anecdotal notes about the student, recorded over time by an observer (such as teacher or caregiver), each COR Advantage item is scored using an eight level scale ranging from 0 (lowest) to 7 (highest).

Some students may also be assessed using the iSprout assessment. The purpose of Sprout (Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting of Kindergarten Readiness) is to measure skills in children from infancy to kindergarten. A derivative of Indiana's Early Learning Standards (which are part of the Foundations to Indiana Academic Standards), Sprout is aligned to the Indiana Standards for kindergarten in the areas of English/Language Arts and Mathematics and includes three functional areas: physical, personal care and social-emotional skills. Data from Sprout assessments is used for state reporting for PK students receiving special education.

Handwriting Without Tears

The Handwriting Without Tears program suits a wide range of children and adapts to their changing needs as they grow. The Readiness & Writing program acknowledges what all great educators know and research supports: that learning needs to be joyful, child-friendly, and active. We believe in meeting children where they are and giving them the experiences that will enable them to blossom. Handwriting Without Tears is a research-based approved curriculum in the state of Indiana.

Foundations Pre-K Early Literacy

The Foundations® Pre-K Activity Set supports students' emerging understanding of the alphabetic principles of letter-sound associations and alphabetical order, and the written language skill of manuscript letter formation.

The skills taught align with those that the Report of the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) identified as strong and consistent predictors for the later development of literacy skills:

- Knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters
- Ability to manipulate the sounds of spoken language
- Ability to rapidly name letters, numbers, objects, or colors
- Ability to write isolated letters or one's name
- Ability to remember spoken information for a short time

The curriculum follows the same principles of instruction as other Wilson programs: it is explicit and systematic; interactive, incorporating multi-sensory instruction and motor memory learning; and offers ample opportunities for practice and feedback.

Explicit and direct instruction is conducted in a whole-class setting in the first semester and a combination of whole-class and small-group settings in the second semester.

Class Offerings:

Growing Together Preschool Beiger Elementary School

Three/Four's Class Offerings (Must be 3 by September 1, 2023)

M, T 9:00–11:30 a.m.
\$120/month

Th, F 9:00–11:30 a.m.
\$120/month

T, Th 12:45–3:15 p.m.
\$120/month

Four/Five's Class Offerings (Must be 4 by October 1, 2023)

M–F 9:00 –11:30 a.m.
\$200/month

M–F 12:45 –3:15 p.m.
\$200/month

W, TH, F 9:00 –11:30 a.m.
\$160/month

M, T, W 12:45 –3:15 p.m.
\$160/month

Growing Together Preschool LaSalle Elementary School

Three/Four's Class Offerings: (Must be 3 by September 1, 2023)

M, T 8:30 –11:00 a.m.
\$120/mo

W, Th 8:30 –11:00 a.m.
\$120/mo.

T, Th 12:00 –2:30 p.m.
\$120/mo.

Four/Five's Class Offerings (Must be 4 by October 1, 2023)

M, W, F 12:00 –2:30 p.m.
\$160/mo.

Registration

Registration Packets may be picked up in the Preschool Office at Beiger Elementary. The Registration Packet needs to be complete before we can accept your Registration. Registration must be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit of the first month's tuition.

Required Documents

Growing Together Preschool requires the following documents to be submitted in order to accept your registration: Child's Birth Certificate, Current Immunization Record, Student Registration Application, Emergency Contact Information, Children's and Hoosiers Immunization Registry, Discipline Acknowledgment, Photo Release/Media Consent, Acknowledgment of Parent Handbook.

What to Bring to School

Each student MUST bring the following items and have each day of attendance.

- A complete set of seasonally appropriate clothing for emergencies. This includes shirt, pants or shorts, undergarments, socks, and shoes. Please mark your student's name on each item with a permanent marker. (Should remain stored in the student's backpack)
 - Jacket or sweatshirt during Fall and Spring
 - Appropriate outer clothing for Winter

- Winter coat
- Boots
- Gloves or mittens
- Hat
- Disposable diapers or pull ups for students who are not potty-trained. Wipes will be provided.

Please LABEL all items with your student's name in permanent marker. Growing Together Preschool is not responsible for lost items.

Toy Policy

While we welcome books or tapes to be shared with the class, we ask that other toys be left at home. Exceptions are made for toys that may be needed to ease the transition (comfort items) into school or items that are pre-approved by the teacher.

Snacks and Meals

Growing Together Preschool is concerned about the food students eat and we adhere to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which consists of snacks and lunches that are low in sugar, feature whole grains, and contain limited preservatives. Students are welcome to bring a commercially prepared, sealed, nutritious snack to share with their entire class. Homemade food is not allowed per food program regulations.

Please include any allergies and/or dietary restrictions on the enrollment form. When possible, substitutions for snack will be made, but families may be required to provide an alternative snack that meets your student's dietary restrictions.

There are two rotating monthly snack menus, which include two snack components to be served per day. Serving sizes are determined based on guidelines for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Through spontaneous conversation during snack/lunch, students are encouraged to taste all food. Most of the time, students discover that they do indeed like something that they had thought they would not like. We do not force students to clean their plates, count how many bites they eat, or force them to try foods that are served to them.

Students are served all components of snack/lunch

due to certification and CACFP requirements. Teachers use snack and meal time to talk about good nutrition and why we need to eat certain foods.

*Please note that only the full day class at the LaSalle site, provides lunch. All other classes will be provided with one snack per day of attendance.

Tuition

Growing Together Preschool reserves the right to revise fees and/or policies after proper notification to parents/guardians. Growing Together Preschool payments are due by the 1st of the month. A late fee of \$25 will be charged to families that do not pay tuition by the 1st. Preschool monthly tuition already includes an adjustment for school breaks. The monthly tuition rates are not based upon a daily rate, and therefore no credits will be issued for inclement weather days or delayed start days. Payments can be made in advance. Families whose tuition is one month delinquent, will be unenrolled from Growing Together Preschool. Readmission is dependent upon full payment of the delinquent balance and availability of classroom openings. Exact cash, checks and money orders (made payable to School City of Mishawaka) are acceptable forms of payment. We do not accept credit or debit card payments at this time. Families that have delinquent tuition will be charged a late fee and then turned over to collections. The parent/guardian understands that he/she assumes all responsibility for collection agency and legal or court fees associated with the account, if that becomes necessary.

Parents/guardians are responsible to pay tuition regardless of your student's absence. Families that have delinquent tuition will be turned over to collections. The parent/ guardian understands that he/she assumes all responsibility for collection agency and legal or court fees associated with the account, if that becomes necessary.

There are opportunities for partial or whole funding through the Child Care and Development Fund or CCDF (also known as preschool vouchers) and On My Way Pre-K. If you are interested in more information and/or applying for either of these programs visit in.gov/fssa/carefinder/on-my-way-pre-k/ or our

Registration tab on our website at MishawakaSchools.com/preschool

Pickup Policy

Staff will discuss Pickup Procedures with parents at the beginning of the school year. It is expected that your child will be picked up promptly at the end of the school day. Late fees will be assessed when children are picked up after the scheduled end of class. This policy applies to all students enrolled in our program. A late pickup fee of \$1 per minute per child is payable if your child remains at school after the end of class. If you are not in the pickup line, you will be asked to enter the building and sign your child out with our staff. The pickup time will be logged and late fees assessed and billed to you.

If a parent has not arrived to pick up their child and cannot be reached by phone within 15 minutes of the end of class, we will call the emergency contacts listed on the emergency contact form. The Department of Child Protective Services and/or the Mishawaka Police Department will be contacted if parents cannot be contacted or do not arrive within 30 minutes after the end of class.

Authorization for Child Release

If someone other than the legal guardian will be picking up a student from Growing Together Preschool, written parental consent must be provided prior to the pick-up or the individual must be listed on the emergency contact form. Written parental consent should include the full name of the person and a phone number. Anyone picking up a student must be 18 years of age and will be required to show identification. No student will be released without written authorization from the parent. Parents may call in case of an emergency and the person will be allowed to pick up, for that day only.

Parents may revise their permanent authorized pick-up information/emergency contact form at the Growing Together Preschool office or by asking your student's teacher for a new emergency contact form. Parents must maintain up to date contact information. If an authorized person, including parents is suspected of being intoxicated or impaired, staff will report to the local police agency.

If an individual is denied permission to pick up a student, a copy of the court order is required to be on file at Growing Together Preschool.

Attendance

Each classroom will maintain daily attendance records. Regular attendance and punctuality in arrival at school are vital to the educational process. The development of good attendance habits is an important learning behavior that will prove beneficial throughout your student's education.

If your student will be absent or late to preschool, please call the school. If your student will be absent for an extended period of time or your family is going on vacation, please notify your student's teacher in writing. Communication between school and home is vital in planning for your student's education.

Emergency Closings and Delay

If the school must be closed or the opening delayed because of inclement weather or other conditions, notification will take place through the School City of Mishawaka Facebook, School City of Mishawaka website, and School Messenger. Local radio and television stations will also be notified. Parents are responsible for knowing about emergency closings and delays. If schools are open, parents should determine whether or not their child can withstand the elements and attend school. In the event that there is a 2-hour delay, the morning preschool sessions will be canceled.

Virtual Learning

If any Indiana State Department or local government issues an order that public schools are not allowed to offer in person learning, students will be offered the opportunity to attend preschool virtually. Preschool tuition will be offered, for virtual instruction, at half the monthly cost of regular, in person classes. Each family, of students who have chosen to participate virtually, will receive an invitation from their child's classroom teacher with instructions on how to log into their virtual classroom.

eLearning Days

Growing Together Preschool will not be in session on any SCM eLearning Days. Special education services will be offered on eLearning days as they are written into the Individualized Education Program.

Temporary Preschool or Classroom Closure

We will follow the Indiana State and local Department of Health guidance in matters related to safety. Families will be notified by the preschool director by phone and email if a temporary closure is warranted.

Tuition Adjustment Due to Temporary Closure

If a preschool class is canceled for 5 cumulative days in a calendar month, the following month's tuition may be credited for the number of closure days on which your child would have attended.

Emergency Staffing Plan

Maintaining Appropriate Staffing

If a staff member is unavailable for work and appropriate staffing cannot be maintained, staff will contact Janice White, Director. She will be responsible for contacting replacement staff members. The staff member selected must meet the staffing requirements in order to maintain supervision requirements.

Notifying Parents

In the event of an emergency that prohibits appropriate staffing from being maintained, Janice White, Director will be responsible for notifying parents.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agency

In the event that emergency care is required, please call the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency through Early Childhood Alliance to assist in emergency care. The number is 1-219-757-1800.

Safety & Emergency Procedures

Fire, Tornado and Safety Drills (Policy 8420)

School City of Mishawaka complies with all fire safety laws and will conduct fire drills in accordance with State law. Specific instructions on how to proceed will be provided to students by their teachers who will be responsible for safe, prompt and orderly evacuation of the building.

Tornado drills will be conducted during the tornado season using procedures prescribed by the State.

The alarm system for tornadoes is different from the alarm system for fires. Students will be instructed on the procedures during a tornado drill.

Safety drills will be conducted once per year. Teachers will provide specific instruction on the appropriate procedure to follow in situations where students must be secured in their building rather than evacuated. These situations can include terrorist threat, a person in possession of a deadly weapon on school property, or other acts of violence.

Medications/Health Plans

Medications at School (Policy 5330)

- Nonprescription medicine
 - Requires the written consent of the parent.
 - Form A, Authorization to Administer Medication must be used for this written authorization.
 - The form is available on the School City of Mishawaka website.
 - Non-prescription medication must be in its original container.
- Prescription Medicine
 - No prescribed medication will be administered to a student without the written prescription from the student's physician accompanied by the written authorization of the parent.
 - Must be in a prescription container labeled with the student's name and exact dosage instructions.
- Medication administered at school must be brought to school by a parent or guardian.
- In some instances, it is necessary to create a student health plan. These are developed with the assistance of the school nurse and all necessary staff training is provided by the school nurse. All medical documentation will be kept on file in the Health Office and must be renewed each school year.

Student Illness or Injury

If a student becomes ill or is injured at school, the student will be sent to the Health Office to be assessed. Students may be sent home for illness at the

discretion of the school nurse following SCM Guidelines Policy #8453. If it is determined that the student needs to be sent home or requires emergency treatment, the student will only be released to parents/guardians or the persons designated on the student enrollment/emergency contact forms. It is vitally important that the information on these cards be as accurate and as up-to-date as possible. Students will not be released from school for health reasons until a parent has been contacted and permission has been obtained for the student to leave. In cases of accident or serious illness if the school is unable to reach parents or the emergency contact, the school will notify emergency personnel for treatment and/or transport.

COVID-19 Guidance

All staff and students will be required to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth while on SCM property.

If your child exhibits any COVID like symptoms (listed below), the student must stay home and report illness to the school. You will be required to call the school nurse for further guidance on how long your child is to remain home.

- Beiger School Nurse: 254-4700 x4702
- LaSalle School Nurse: 254-4800 x4802

Students and Staff should recognize the following COVID-19-related symptoms:

- A fever of 100.4 or higher
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting or abdominal pain
- New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever
- New loss of taste or smell
- New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)

All Students and staff are expected to conduct an at-home self-screening/monitoring for COVID-19 related symptoms prior to leaving their home on a daily basis.

Students and staff exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, without being otherwise explained, or in a household

with a confirmed positive case or has been exposed to an individual who has tested positive to COVID-19 are prohibited from coming to school/work, and if they do come to school they will be sent home immediately.

Students and employees exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, or in a household with a confirmed positive case or who have been exposed to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 are to remain at home and seek medical guidance/care.

Student/staff will be required to be fever free for 24 hours without use of fever reducing medication before returning to school.

Growing Together Preschool follows guidance from St. Joseph County Health Department.

Communicable Diseases/Fever (Policy 8453)

- Any student with a fever of 100 degrees or above should be kept home until they are fever free without the use of fever-reducing medication for 24 hours.
- Students should also have no signs of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours prior to returning to school.
- If a student has a communicable disease that is transmittable through normal school contacts, poses a substantial threat to the health and safety of the school community, or is infested with parasites, the school nurse may send the student home.
 - The nurse will communicate with the student's parent, and describe the nature of the illness or infestation.
 - The student may return to school when the following criteria are met:
 - The student's return to school meets the guidelines in the current edition of the Indiana State Department of Health Communicable Disease Reference Guide for Schools.
 - A doctor's letter stating it is safe for the student to be readmitted is provided.

An incident report will be written and sent home if a student is injured while at school, and requires care

from preschool staff or the nurse. A phone call to parent will be made for any injury to a student's head.

Safe Conditions Policy

- **Care and Supervision:** All students will be supervised by at least one qualified caregiver and the minimum required student: staff ratios will be maintained, at all times.
 - Student: Staff Ratios
 - 3/4-year-old classes- 10:1 with a max of 20 students
 - 4/5-year-old classes- 12:1 with a max of 24 students
 - Growing Together Preschool strives to maintain a lower student: staff ratio by providing additional staff members in each classroom, as needed.
 - In the event of an emergency in which we are unable to maintain appropriate staffing requirements, the emergency staffing plan will be followed.
 - This plan is posted in each classroom.
- **Safety during repairs and remodeling:** Signs will be posted around the building and areas will be avoided, at any time that repairs or remodeling are taking place.
 - Any repairs or remodeling that would be unsafe for students will take place during a time, when preschool is not in session.
- **Safety inside of the facility:**
 - Designated staff members (Lead Teacher) will check the classroom for any possible safety hazards before class starts each day.
 - All electrical outlets that are at student's level are covered with appropriate electrical outlet covers.
 - Any broken toys or furnishings that pose a threat will be removed.
 - Students will be supervised outside of the classroom, when climbing stairs.
- **Safety outside of the facility:**
 - Designated staff members (Program Assistants) will check the safety of the outside playground equipment each day prior to students entering the playground.
 - Staff will:
 - Report any items that pose a possible safety hazard for students to maintenance/custodial staff and students will not be permitted to use playground equipment until hazards have been removed/remedied.
 - Follow universal precautions in handling any sharp equipment or bodily fluids.
- **Routine Classroom Cleaning:**
 - Cleaning/Sanitizing/Disinfecting
 - Classroom staff will use approved disinfecting wipes to wipe down tables before and after snack and after any messy play at the table.
 - Approved disinfecting wipes are used by manufacturer directions.
 - Staff will use approved 3M #34 Food Grade cleaner for tables, when children are not present.
 - Staff will have used approved 3M #40 Disinfectant to clean/disinfect diaper changing tables and general classroom items, including toys, cubbies, door handles, etc.
 - Staff will use soap and water to remove visible dirt then rinse with clean water.
 - Students will follow hand washing procedures before and after snack, after blowing nose or sneezing into hand, after messy play, and after using the restroom.
 - Custodial staff will follow OSHA regulations in cleaning the classrooms at the end of the day.
 - Cloth toys and dress-up toys will be laundered weekly or more often, as needed.
 - Furniture, rugs, and carpeting in all areas will be vacuumed daily.
 - Hard floors will be swept and mopped per custodial requirements, daily.
 - Bathrooms will be cleaned daily or more often, if necessary.
 - Toilet seats will be cleaned and sanitized, at least daily, and as needed.
 - General cleaning of the entire preschool classrooms will be done as needed.
 - Wastebaskets (with disposable liners) will be available to students and staff and will be emptied when full.

- Door handles and faucets are cleaned at least daily, and more often when students/staff are ill.
- Regular cleaning and sanitation will increase if there is an outbreak of a contagious infection or disease in setting.
- Schedule of using approved sanitation and disinfectant solutions
 - Tables used for eating will be cleaned with soap and water, rinsed, and then sprayed with approved 3M #34 Food Grade cleaner, at the end of each day, per directions printed on the label.
 - Staff will use Clorox wipes, when students are present.
 - Mouthed toys, including machine washable toys and cloth books, will be washed, rinsed, and sanitized in between use by different students.
 - A system of ongoing rotation of mouthed toys will be implemented (i.e. a labeled “mouthed toy” bin).
 - Toys (that are not mouthed toys) will be washed, rinsed, sanitized and air-dried, at least weekly.
 - Cubbies will be washed, rinsed, and sanitized weekly.
 - Water tables will be emptied and sanitized after each use or more often, as needed.
 - Students will wash hands before and after play and be closely supervised.
- **Communication Plan for Staff and Parents:**
 - Staff and volunteers will receive a written copy of this policy in their orientation packets before beginning work. Training will be provided on cleaning and sanitation guidelines and procedures, at the time of employment, and when necessary.

Outside Play

The students will go outside everyday depending on weather. We will determine if the children should go outside on a day to day basis based on the conditions that day such as the temperature and wind chill factor. We will only go outside when the temperature, including the wind chill, is 25* or above, per Paths to

Quality. Please send your child with a coat, hat and gloves each day so that they will be prepared for the outside weather, including snow.

We use caution taking students when outside temperatures are above 90*. Families may send a water bottle labeled with their child’s name to school each day to be taken outside.

Discipline

It is very important that a child’s development is nurtured through caring, patience, and understanding. There may be instances, however, when staff will be required to work through challenging behaviors with students. Growing Together Preschool will follow the School City of Mishawaka Code of Conduct, in addition to The Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning Suspension and Expulsion Policy (#5702). To view the policy visit the link under Parent Resources on our website: MishawakaSchools.com/preschool.

In addition, in response to challenging behaviors, staff will:

- Support children’s social and emotional development
- Utilize the 6 steps in Resolving Conflict (Taken from HighScope curriculum)
 1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.
 - Place self between the children, on their level.
 - Use a calm voice
 - Remain Neutral
 2. Acknowledge children’s feelings.
 - Let children know you will need to hold any object/toy in question.
 3. Gather information about what happened.
 4. Restate the problem.
 5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.
 - Encourage children to think of a solution.
 6. Be prepared to give follow-up support.
 - Stay near the children.

If challenging behaviors remain ongoing, over a period of time, staff will:

- Contact parents through either verbal and/or written communication.
- Contact the Director for consultation with the behavior team.
 - The behavior team may decide to collect data from all who work with the child, including parents
 - Once data is collected, if determined necessary, a Positive Behavior Intervention Plan may be developed.
- Support the family in identifying potential outside resources.

In response to challenging behaviors, staff will not use:

- “Time-Out”
- Physical punishments, even if requested by the parent
- Threats or bribes
- Depriving your child of food or other basic needs
- Humiliation or isolation
- Public reward systems

In the event that a serious safety threat exists and is not able to be addressed with reasonable modifications and/or the use of positive behavior supports and strategies, School City of Mishawaka administrators may exclude students from attending Growing Together Preschool, as a last resort.

Calming Area

Every classroom has a calming area that provides a child a place to calm down and take a break. Each one is a designated area with the sole purpose of being a safe space for a child to go to when they are feeling anxious, stressed, mad, sad, nervous or any big emotion. It provides children with a place to let go of strong emotions and begin to feel calm and ready to engage with others again. Learning how to solve problems and self-regulate emotions are very important life skills for children to learn. The calming area is never used as punishment, it is not time out, it is used as a teaching tool to support the social-emotional needs of children.

Questions/Concerns

We understand that there may be an occasion when a problem or concern arises. A grievance/concern can be submitted by a parent/guardian to the Director. The Director will contact you as soon as possible to discuss the issue. Questions or concerns can also be communicated via Email and/or phone call. Please contact the director by phone at 254-4711 for questions that require immediate assistance. In the event that the director cannot be reached in an emergency, please contact the Beiger Elementary office at 254-4700 and the school secretary will assist you.

Celebrations

Because friends are such an important part of our program and our lives, Growing Together Preschool will celebrate friends and friendship by having a party on/around Valentine’s Day. Families are welcome to donate snacks and paper products that are prepackaged and store bought as requested by the classroom teacher.

Birthdays are a special day and will be celebrated during class. Families are welcome to bring in a store bought, wrapped birthday snack for the whole class. A healthy component to snack will be offered in addition to any birthday snacks.

Individual classrooms may also have celebrations associated with current studies/projects. Parents will be notified by letter of upcoming parties/celebrations.

Religious Holidays

Growing Together Preschool is a multicultural program, committed to serving students of many different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Our program strives to be sensitive and respectful to all ethnic/religious groups. While teachers will not single out one religion during a holiday, we will explain and answer questions in a developmentally appropriate way, including what the meaning of that religious holiday is to different cultures. We encourage students to share with the class regarding how their family celebrates. If you do not wish for your student to participate in any holiday activities and/or discussions, please provide a written note to the classroom teacher indicating which holidays you do not want your student to participate in.

Parent and Family Involvement

Growing Together Preschool encourages an active and positive relationship between school staff and families. We feel it is vital to communicate regularly with parents and involve parents/families in school activities. We communicate and involve families in the program through monthly newsletters, family engagement activities, parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences and our standing invitation to help in the classroom as special guest readers or as parent helpers. Parents are always welcomed and encouraged to spend time in their child's classroom. Parents who wish to participate in classroom activities will need to have a background check completed in the main office that requires a previously scheduled appointment. Please stop in at the Elementary School Office to complete the required background check form.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled one time per year following the School City of Mishawaka schedule. Parent-Teacher conferences are 15 minutes long and will include an overview of your student's present performance. Teachers will review anecdotal notes, student progress in academic and social emotional areas, and answer any questions. If parents would like to have a conference at a time other than the scheduled conference times, please make arrangements with your child's teacher.

Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

Growing Together Preschool is required by Indiana State Law (IC 31-33-5-1) to report any cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Child Services. All Growing Together Preschool Teachers receive annual training regarding the signs of child abuse and neglect. Abuse Hotline Phone # 1-800-800-5556.

Confidentiality

Growing Together Preschool teachers will be privileged to confidential information as they work with students and families. A strict confidentiality policy is in place in order to ensure privacy for students and families is maintained. Information regarding students will only be shared with appropriate family and staff members.

Photo Release Information

Growing Together Preschool and School City of Mishawaka are proud to share good news about our students, programs, and events. The school corporation encourages media coverage so that the community may learn about the great things that students and staff are doing.

During the school year, Growing Together Preschool staff and/or School City of Mishawaka staff may want to photograph or videotape your student. Information that would potentially be shared for the purpose of media coverage includes, but is not limited to: student's photo, name, grade, age, videos, and images. If you DO NOT want your child to be included in media coverage, corporation publications, websites and social media please contact the Growing Together Preschool office and complete the MEDIA DENIAL form. Without a MEDIA DENIAL form on file, it will be assumed that you have granted permission for your child to appear in videos and/or photographs for (social)media usage.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping us highlight the good work and efforts of our learners and instructors.

Policy on Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, Illegal Substances

The use of tobacco, and use or possession of alcohol, illegal substances and firearms is prohibited on school property.

Right to Revise Handbook and Policies

Growing Together Preschool reserves the right to revise Handbook and add/revise any policies with advance notice to parents.



Growing Together Preschool

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Parent Student Handbook

I have received a copy of the **2023-2024 Growing Together Preschool Parent Student Handbook** and I understand that I have an obligation to read and become familiarized with the content cited in this handbook. I understand the Policies and Guidelines are updated periodically and may change from time to time. I understand that any such changes that may occur during the 2022-2023 school year supersede the policies in this document. I understand that updated policies will be communicated in print form.

Student's Name: _____

Preschool Site: ☐ Beiger ☐ LaSalle

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



School City of Mishawaka

1402 South Main Street

Mishawaka, IN 46544

574.254.4500 • MishawakaSchools.com

March 2023