Millcreek Township School District –

Child Development & Early Learning Programs

Parent Program Guide:

Preschool





Mission Statement

The Millcreek Township School District Preschool Program believes in the importance of quality early learning experiences as the building blocks for future success. We strive to provide a fully integrated, enriched, student-centered, and hands-on learning environment that meets the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of students ages 3-5. Our schools, families, and community work together to provide the foundation for life-long learning.

Friendship ~ Respect ~ Share ~ Be Kind ~ Do Your Best ~ Make Good Choices

Millcreek Township School District
Office of Child Development & Early Learning
3740 West 26th Street
Erie PA 16506
814-836-6090

Welcome to Preschool

Research shows children are born with an incredible capacity and desire to learn, and it is critical that their first academic steps be in the right direction.

Research also shows children who are given the opportunity to participate in a quality early learning experience thrive when they enter kindergarten and have a higher percentage of secondary education than students who do not participate in a Pre-K program.

Welcome to the Millcreek Township School District. Preschool is such an important part of your child's life, and we are so excited to be a part of it! We look forward to getting to know your child and your family. Millcreek Township School District Preschool programs provide fully integrated, enriched, student-centered, hands-on environments which engage students in a structured curriculum centered around social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development. We have carefully aligned our preschool curriculum with the District's kindergarten curriculum to assure all students participating have a smooth and seamless transition to kindergarten. Each preschool classroom has an experienced team of professionals, led by a certified teacher and a preschool assistant.

We have structured our program so that extended day services (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.) are available for working families. Also, possible financial assistance through Pre-K Counts funds is available to help qualifying families pay for preschool programming.

We welcome and encourage parent involvement and believe that home and school are a young child's two most important worlds. If home and school are connected in a positive and respectful way, children feel secure. It is important to us that you feel completely comfortable as a parent or family member when you walk into one of our preschool programs.

Through quality early learning experiences provided daily in the Millcreek Township School District Preschool Program, children form the building blocks needed for future academic success and life-long learning. If you have questions at any time please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,
The MTSD Early Learning Team

Sara

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MTSD Preschool Program Locations

Asbury Early Learning Team
5875 Sterrettania Road
Fairview Pa 16415
814-836-6103

Belle Valley Early Learning Team
5300 Henderson Road
Erie Pa 16509
814-835-5600

McDowell Early Learning Team
3580 West 38th Street
Erie Pa 16506
814-836-6823

Westlake Early Learning Team
4330 Westlake Road
Erie Pa 16505
814-835-5773

Walnut Creek Early Learning Team
5901 Sterrettania Road
Fairview PA 16415
814-835-5708



How Do I Help Make My Child's First Day of Preschool a Success?



Welcome to the Millcreek Township School District Early Learning Community! The first day of Preschool is an exciting milestone in your child's life. Your child is embarking on a journey that will lead him/her on many roads of discovery and learning. We are honored to be a part of your child's early learning years and first school experience. We are looking forward to a wonderful school year with your child and your family!

As wonderful as this new experience may be, it can also be quite stressful for the young child. New situations and change can, at times, be unsettling for all of us. For many children this may be their first experience of separation from parents or care givers at home. It is common for even the most out-going child to be anxious the first day of school.

We have provided a few suggestions for assisting your child during this time. Remember the preschool staff will be available to provide support and assistance making your child's first school days happy days.

- Prepare your child for the new school experience by explaining what to expect. Answer all questions directly and honestly.
- Convey a positive attitude. Young children are aware of our feelings. Your enthusiasm will assure your child that school can be a fun and exciting place.
- Establish a routine involving both the night before a school day as well as morning preparation. Rituals and routines will add predictability and are comforting in unfamiliar situations.
- Bring something from home. This is acceptable and often reassuring in helping the child with the initial adjustment to school. This item may be a treasured blanket or even a photo from home.
- Clearly state to your child where you will be and when you will return. It may also be helpful to discuss what will happen when you are reunited.
- Maintain a clear good-buy routine. This may include warning the child you are leaving in 3 minutes, a kiss and hug, or a wave from the window. Once you tell your child you are leaving, it is important to follow through. Extending the good-buy with "Ok, just one more kiss, and then I really, really have to go." tends to heighten anxiety rather than relieve it. Avoid sneaking out; this seems to encourage children to become less trusting and makes the second day of school even harder.

Again, please know we are here to make the first day of school a happy transition, and we look forward to an exciting and fun year. Welcome!

Frequently Reference Policies and Procedures

Parents' Arrival and Departure Procedures

Please make sure that you are signing in and out every single day upon arriving and departing. This is very important for many reasons, and it is essential to our daily operations.

When you sign in you must remember the following:

SIGNING IN

- To provide your child's name
- The time you entered the classroom
- The person who dropped the child off
- The emergency contact number you can be reached at on THAT DAY!
  - PLEASE NOTE THIS NUMBER MUST HAVE AN 814 AREA CODE AND WE MUST BE ABLE TO REACH YOU IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY!
- The person who will be picking up your child
  - (Remember if someone else is picking up your child that you have designated as a release person: THEY MUST BRING IDENTIFICATION WITH THEM OR YOUR CHILD CANNOT BE SENT HOME WITH THEM)

SIGNING OUT

- The time your child is picked up
- YOU MUST SIGN YOUR CHILD OUT FOR THE DAY WITH A SIGNATURE!
- After you sign out your child, please remember to empty his/her mailbox every single day. Important information goes home on a daily basis.

Parents' Lunch Packing Procedures

- ✓ Please pack your child's lunch in a bag or lunch box that has his/her name on it.
- ✓ Please remember to pack utensils the child may need for his/her lunch.
- ✓ Always remember to pack a napkin for your child every day.
- ✓ If there are any special instructions you have for your child's lunch, please place a note inside, and we will be sure to read it.

Contacting the Teacher

Email is the best way to contact your teacher. If you prefer to leave a phone message, there is a phone in each preschool classroom. Please do not worry if the teacher does not immediately respond to your email or phone message. Instructional times, as well as arrival and departure times, are very busy times for the children and the teacher. When your teacher is available, she will email or call you back.

Also, you can set up a conference with the teacher if you wish to discuss anything. Feel free to arrange a meeting time with your child's teacher.

Preschool Supply List



The following list includes items that your child will need to bring to school to ensure the first day goes as smoothly as possible.

1. A backpack or small tote that has your child's name clearly written somewhere on the bag.
2. One folder (this is a take home folder to go in their bag every day).
3. A Ziploc bag with your child's name written clearly on it that contains a change of clothes in it. Please make sure that throughout the year the clothes are updated so that they are seasonally appropriate and include the following:
    - Fresh underwear
    - Socks
    - Shirt and/or Sweater
    - Pants

    (Please note that every time clothes are sent home fresh ones will need to be returned the next day in case of an accident.)
4. If your child is wearing pull-ups, you will need to pack and clearly label a fresh box of wipes and the pull-up of your choice.
5. Lunch: Because lunch falls within our preschool schedule and is a very important social part of our day, you will need to either pack lunch (please be sure your child's name is clearly written on your child's lunch bag/box) or buy lunch from the school cafeteria. You will be provided with a monthly school lunch menu. Should your child buy lunch, you will need to fill out the daily lunch form found near the sign in and out sheets. Please be sure to specify what menu option your child will be purchasing that day and what type of milk he/she will be purchasing.
6. Naptime Essentials (extended day students):
    - Pillow
    - Sleeping bag or blanket
    - One warm fuzzy from home (stuffed animal or plush toy)
    - Crib Sheets fit the cots perfectly
7. You will be provided with a Pre-K Open House flyer which will list any additional supplies needed for your child's Pre-K experience.

Student Files



When a child is enrolled in one of our programs, the parents complete the application along with required program forms. These forms are kept for each student in a student file, kept confidential and in a locked space. All forms must be kept up-to-date throughout the school year. Let your child's program staff know immediately if any changes occur.

Required documents in the student files include:

- **Agreement form**
  This form designates which schedule option you have chosen for your child and clearly lists the required payment policies. The Agreement form lists persons designated by the parent to whom their child may be released. Agreements must be completed and submitted with the annual registration fee before a student may begin preschool.
  Refer to our webpage for tuition information. This is updated each school year: https://www.mtsd.org/district/activities-programs/child-development
- **Emergency Contact – Parental Consent form**
  This form identifies the family's contact information as well as indicates persons to whom the child may be released if parents are unavailable. Only identified family members and those listed as 'designated to release to' persons may pick up the child. Individuals new to staff are required to provide identification before the child is released to him/her. Additionally, the Emergency Contact – Parental Consent form includes medical information, such as allergies or other medical conditions, as well as doctor and insurance information.
- **Child Health Report**
  Each enrolled child must have a current health record completed by your child's doctor within 30 days of your child's first day of school. A new health assessment and immunizations are required each year your child is in our preschool program. The Office of Child Development regulations further require participating children have documentation of an annual flu shot or an exemption from the flu shot letter from the parent on file each school year. Please provide this to your child's teacher for his/her student file.
- **Parent Permission form**
  Parents are required to sign this form when they have received the Parent Program Guide for Preschool and the Tuition Packet. Parents can sign the photo release, the permission to share student academic information, and hand sanitizer sections on this form as they deem appropriate.
- **Child Service Report, if applicable**
  Your child's preschool teacher will complete a Child Service Report and review it with you in January.
- **Medication forms, if applicable**
  Children are not permitted to have any medicines on their person or in their book bag. If your child has a medical condition requiring medicine, the MTSD Medication Guidelines must be followed. Inform your child's teacher immediately if your child has any medical conditions.

Be sure to inform the preschool teaching team of any changes you need to make to your forms. Additionally, the preschool teaching team will ask you to review your Agreement form and the 'Emergency Contact – Parental Consent' form at least twice during the school year: typically, at the start of the school year and in January.

Why Is Family Involvement and Participation So Important?



We believe that home and school are a young child's two most important worlds, and if home and school are connected in a positive and respectful way, children feel secure. It is important to us that you feel completely comfortable as a parent or family member when you walk into one of our preschool programs.

We encourage families to observe our classrooms prior to preschool registration. Meeting the teachers and seeing the classroom environment is a very important step in choosing the early learning community which best fits your family's needs.

There are scheduled orientation days for families and students to meet their teacher and see their classroom before school starts, as well as two parent teacher conferences at mid-year and year-end to go over student progress and review portfolios.

MTSD Child Development Preschool Programs have an open-door policy for families, we welcome guest speakers and guest readers. Families will find sign-up sheets for such events and are encouraged to participate as much as their schedule will allow. If you have a hobby, skill, song, or family tradition you would like to share, we invite you to do so.

Have a question or suggestion for our preschool program? Your input is valued and can help us improve our programs. Feel free to contact the preschool supervisory team by calling 814-836-6090 or through email:

- Sara Grutkowski, Child Development & Early Learning Coordinator – grutkowski@mtsd.org
- Susan Greenaway, Supervisor of Child Development & Early Learning – greenaway@mtsd.org

Teachers plan special gatherings for grandparents and incorporate special events into the school day, such as '*Muffins for Mom*' and '*Donuts for Dad*' days. Teachers also plan sing-a-longs, plays, and graduation ceremonies to incorporate family participation.

What Do You Need to Know About Your Child's Early Learning Environment?

Research shows the learning environment plays a key role in a child's ability to learn and feel comfortable in their school setting. In our preschool programs you will find students and families are always greeted with a warm welcome.

Our classroom environments convey very important messages to our students such as:

- You are in a good place – Students' work is displayed attractively at a level which children can see it. The room is welcoming and friendly.

- You are able to be independent, to build self-esteem, and to do many things on your own here - Materials are stored on low shelves so students can reach them without help. Materials are organized logically and are located in areas in which they can be used. Environmental print is everywhere, and labels are prevalent to encourage independence.

- You belong here and are an integral part of our community – Each child has a cubby, or basket, labeled with his or her name or picture on it. Pictures of children and their families are displayed.

- This is a place you can trust and feel safe and comfortable to explore and try out your ideas – Equipment and materials are arranged consistently so children know where to find the things they need. Shelves are neat and uncluttered; materials are labeled so children can make choices easily. There is a well-defined illustrated schedule displayed so children learn the order of events that occur each day and know what to expect. Daily routines stay consistent.

- This is a safe place to explore and try out your ideas – Areas are protected and well defined. All interest areas include all items needed for students to be successful (e.g. smocks in the art, water, and sand areas). Toys are rotated frequently and new things are added to keep the interest of children.



How Children Develop and Learn



Child development may be divided into four areas—social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. While these divisions are both necessary and useful, it is somewhat artificial because development does not divide neatly into categories. Rather, the four categories are closely related and often overlap. It is important for educators and parents to remember that development in one area affects and is influenced by development in all other areas. Preschool teachers are actively aware of this and are constantly paying attention to every area when guiding your child's learning.

Social/Emotional Development –

- Social/emotional development in the preschool years is about socialization. It is about becoming a competent and confident person, as well as the process by which children learn the values and behaviors accepted by society.
- MTSD preschool teachers focus on three goals for social/emotional development:
  1. Achieving a sense of self – The ability to know oneself and relate to other people; both children and adults.
  2. Taking responsibility for self and others – The ability to follow rules and routines, respect others, and take initiative.
  3. Behaving in a prosocial way – The ability to show empathy and get along in the world. For example, sharing and taking turns.



Physical Development –

- Physical development involves gross motor (large muscle) and fine motor (small muscle) skills. Preschool teachers work hard to create a classroom environment which promotes individual physical development. As children learn what their bodies can do, they gain self-confidence. This self-confidence promotes a student's willingness to try new and challenging tasks, creating a positive cycle, which effects learning as a whole over time.
- MTSD preschool teachers focus on two goals for physical development:
  1. Achieving gross motor control – The ability to move the large muscles in the body, especially the arms and legs, consciously and deliberately. Gross motor control includes balance and stability





and movements such as running, jumping, hopping, galloping, and skipping. In addition, physical manipulations such as throwing, kicking, and catching are learned.

2. Achieving fine motor control – The ability to use and coordinate the small muscles in the hands and wrist with dexterity. As these fine muscles develop, children are able to perform self-help skills and manipulate small objects such as scissors and writing tools. It is important to note the achievement of fine motor skills generally lags behind gross motor development.



Cognitive Development –

- Cognitive development refers to the mind and how it works. It involves how children think, how they see their world, and how they use what they learn.
- MTSD preschool teachers focus on three goals for cognitive development:
  1. Learning and problem solving – The ability to be purposeful about acquiring and using information, resources, and materials. As children observe events around them, teachers are observing: are they able to ask questions, make predictions, and test possible solutions, as learning reaches beyond just acquiring facts.



2. Thinking logically – The ability to gather and make sense of information by comparing, contrasting, sorting, classifying, counting, measuring, and recognizing patterns. As children use logical thinking, they organize their world conceptually and gain a better understanding of how it works.
3. Representing and thinking symbolically – The ability to use objects in a unique way. For example; using a cup to represent a telephone, pretending to be a mommy or a firefighter, portraying the world through charts or pictures (e.g. making a graph to show the weather over time or drawing a picture to show what happened in a story). Such representations and symbols show that students are able to use materials and their imaginations to explore abstract ideas.

Language Development –



- Language development includes understanding and communicating through words, spoken and written. In preschool, a child's ability to communicate thoughts and feelings through spoken language takes on new importance as language becomes the principle tool for establishing and maintaining relationships with adults and other children.
- It is important to remember that language development is closely related to cognitive development because words represent objects and ideas.
- Language and literacy skills go hand in hand. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing develop interdependently in children.
- MTSD preschool teachers focus on two goals for language development:
    1. <u>Listening and speaking</u> – The ability to use spoken language to communicate with others. Teachers look for the student's ability to enlarge one's vocabulary, express oneself, understand the oral speech of others, participate in a conversation, and use language to solve problems. It is important to note that as children learn to listen and speak, they gain control of themselves and their world. They relate to others and gain and store more information.



2. <u>Reading and writing</u> – The ability to make sense of written language. Students will begin to understand the purpose of written symbols and words and how they work. They will gain knowledge of the alphabet and begin to write letters and words.

What Do MTSD Preschool Students Learn?



- Literacy – MTSD preschool teachers thoughtfully and purposefully interact with children and plan experiences that support emerging literacy. A print-rich environment that allows children to practice literacy skills in real-life experiences, combined with explicit teaching of key concepts, is the foundation of literacy learning in preschool. As children's excitement about their newfound ability to read and write increases, teachers create multiple opportunities for continued literacy learning.
    - Components of Literacy – increased vocabulary and language, phonological awareness, knowledge of print, letters, and words, comprehension, understanding books and other texts, literacy as a source of enjoyment.



- Mathematics – MTSD preschool teachers' knowledge of the substance of math content provides facts and concepts needed to promote and extend children's mathematical thinking. Teachers use multiple opportunities throughout the day to help children build competence in math. When children give each person at the table a cracker, pour water from one container to another, put all the big buttons in one pile and the smaller ones in another, or clap a rhythmic pattern, they are learning math.
    - Components of Mathematics – number concepts, patterns and relationships, geometry and special sense, measurement, data collection, organizational, and representation.



- Science – Scientific facts are important, but how they are put together into meaningful ideas is more significant. Preschool children learn science by exploring the world around them. When you provide an environment with many varied materials, they try out things to see how they work, they experiment, they manipulate, they are curious, and they ask questions. As they seek answers to their questions they are learning to enjoy and appreciate their surroundings. These activities are scientific to young children.
    - Components of Science – physical science; physical properties of objects, life science; living things, and the earth and the environment.

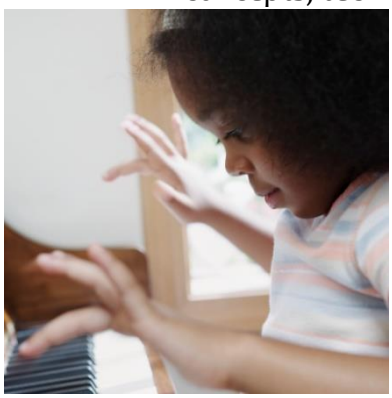
- Social Studies – In preschool, everyday experiences pertinent to children's lives are the foundations for learning social studies. Board games or the challenge of riding around a tricycle path teach mapping skills. Children learn about time (history) from the established daily routine. When the teacher sets up a play grocery store and helps children learn about jobs, buying, and selling, they are helping the children learn about economics. Preschoolers learn about civics by learning to cooperate and resolve differences within their classroom setting.
    - Components of Social Studies – Spaces and geography, people and how they live, people and the environment, people and the past.



- The Arts – MTSD preschool teachers expose students to a wide variety of experiences in the arts throughout the day. Children mix paints; pound and shape clay; build structures with blocks, boxes, and Lego's; dance; dramatize stories; clap rhythms; and sing chants and songs. Preschool children love to get their hands into materials and move their bodies.
    - Components of the Arts – Dance, music, theater, or performing arts (what we preschool teachers call dramatic play), and visual arts.



- Technology – Children learn technology by exploring how things work. If you view technology from a broad perspective, you can see how it can be integrated into all aspects of the preschool classroom. MTSD preschool teachers know technology as the study of tools, machines, materials, techniques, and sources of power that make work easier and that solve problems. When children figure out what kind of tool they need to build a structure using wood scraps, they are solving a technological problem. When children sing songs into a tape recorder or create colored lines on the screen by dragging a mouse, they are using technology tools.
    - Components of Technology – awareness of technology, basic operations and concepts, technology tools, people and technology.



- Process Skills – Methods of learning are called process skills. Children are learning methods of communicating, thinking mathematically, doing what scientists do, conducting social science research, creating as artists, and using technology through each curricular content area.
    - Process skills can be defined as observing, exploring, problem solving, connecting, organizing, communicating, and representing information.

Progress Monitoring



Pennsylvania has helped guide preschools to develop programs which will lay a solid foundation for life-long learning, through the use of the Early Learning Standards which define the ways in which children learn, the ways teachers can support children's learning, and the expectations of learning and development for children when they enter kindergarten.

Prior to starting the preschool year, parents are requested to complete an Ages & Stages Questionnaire about their child. This information is given to the preschool teacher at the start of the school year, allowing her to tailor your child's preschool experience to his/her needs.

During the school year, teachers chart a student's developmental progress through the use of portfolios. Each student's portfolio includes teacher observations, student work samples, and formal assessments. Portfolios are an excellent way to track a student's progress over time.

Teachers formally assess children three times a year.



- Initial evaluations occur within the month of September, and show the teachers and staff where each child is within the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. This information gives each teacher a starting point for future lesson planning
- Mid-year evaluations show each student's progress throughout the first half of the school year and are followed by a mid-year parent teacher conference to review student progress and discuss strengths and any areas for future improvement.
- Year-end evaluations show a student's year-to-date progress. Year-end evaluation information is compiled and shared with parents at the year-end parent teacher conference.

Although student portfolios stay in the classroom, teachers keep parents abreast of their children's progress through formal and informal communication throughout the school year.

Should parents have a specific concern about their child's development, they may schedule a meeting to discuss their concerns with the teacher and/or Child Development Supervisor, at any time. Parents are also able to access their child's portfolio by signing it out for review.

Sample Preschool Schedule



8:45 – 9:00 Arrival Time / Children's Choice:
Research shows that arrival time can be one of the most important times of the day for young students and their families. Positive greetings help to promote a young child's self-esteem as well as create a welcoming environment for parents. This is why you will find children and parents are greeted with a warm welcome daily. Once students are settled into the classroom they are able to participate in centers, books, puzzles, multi-sensory table, etc.

9:00 – 9:20 Morning Meeting:



*Welcome to School Song
*Attendance
*Days of the Week
*Calendar Time
*Weather Watchers

9:20 – 10:10 Outdoor Exploration:



Children will have the opportunity to participate in outdoor exploration on a regular basis weather permitting. Active outdoor exploration is considered an important part of the preschool curriculum and is viewed as a developmentally appropriate learning experience. MTSD Preschool teachers move about the active outdoor exploration area interacting, observing, and documenting students' activities.

10:15 – 10:30 Hand Washing/Bathroom Check



10:30 – 10:45 Morning Snack:
A nutritional snack is provided each day. During snack time students are encouraged to engage in conversation with peers promoting development of creative thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills. Children are also given the opportunity to participate in healthy cooking projects and are encouraged to refine self-help skills daily.

10:45 – 11:15 Literacy Workshop:



Through the use of our English language arts curriculum, literacy workshop time will focus on letter and sound recognition. Students will work with Pre-K word wall words and phonics. Writing incorporates name books, preschool alphabet books, monthly self-portraits, alphabet stencils, and numerical writing. Literature, vocabulary, and writing will be presented in a variety of media, including flannel board stories, books, story-telling, finger plays, and poetry.

11:15 – 11:45 Math & Science Workshop / Children's Choice:



Students will rotate through math and science learning centers daily. Through the use of our math curriculum and a wide variety of media, students learn skills and concepts such as letters, numbers, shapes, and spatial relationships such as under/over, inside/outside, and big/small. Students will learn higher order thinking and problem-solving skills through science experimentation and exploration, hands-on activities, and small group math exploration.

11:45 – 12:00 Clean Up and Bathroom Check



12:00 Lunch Time:

A fundamental part of our day, lunch time is structured so that students practice good manners, good hygiene, and language skills, as well math and science skills. Teachers give students various lunch duties to encourage independence and build self-esteem. During lunch the children and teachers all sit together and enjoy conversation while listening to a favorite CD or tape.

As students finish lunch - 12:30 Music and Movement:

Students will find they are engaged in music and movement activities such as dance, yoga, creative expression, exercise / stretching, singing, and using musical instruments.



12:30 Children's Choice

This non-structured time gives students an opportunity to engage in meaningful play.



Students may select materials and/or activities of their own choice. Areas are set up with various developmental learning centers that include blocks, manipulative games, writing / literacy, science / math, water and sand play, as well as art, play dough, and dramatic play. During this time children may be called up to sign in (practicing name writing) and complete monthly self-portraits as well as portfolio formal assessments.

1:30 Goodbye Song / Daily Departure



Sample Extended Care Schedule



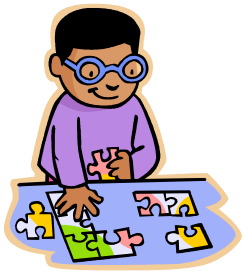
Morning
7:00 – 8:45: Play
Table toys, play dough, coloring, painting, stamping, stencils, cutting, tracing, fine and large motor development, and small group friend association time. (This time is also used for catch up work or pulling children individually to work on colors, numbers, shapes, and various portfolio assessments.)

Afternoon



1:45 – 3:00: Rest Time
Each student has his/her own cot and is permitted to bring a stuffed animal, blanket, and pillow from home. Rest time starts with the teacher reading a story to the students while they get settled on their cots. Then soothing soft music is played to facilitate a peaceful rest time which is important in helping children to renew their energy.

3:00-3:30: Afternoon Snack Time



3:30-4:30: Play
Table toys, play dough, coloring, painting, stamping, stencils, cutting, tracing, fine and large motor development, and small group friend association time. (This time is also used for catch up work or pulling children individually to work on colors, numbers, shapes, and various portfolio assessments.)

4:30-4:45: Story Time

4:45-6:00: Supervised Free Choice/ Organized Games- Getting Ready to Go Home!

It Looks Like I Am Playing, But….

Each preschool classroom has a variety of learning centers at which students will play. During the preschool day, the children are given multiple opportunities to play at the centers of their choice. Play is very important for this age group. It is how they learn. The preschool teaching team circulate among the children as they are playing to encourage their development through conversation, acknowledgement, modeling, and reinforcement.

You might think the children are 'just' playing. But they are truly learning!

Art: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* developing my creativity, small motor skills, problem solving, sharing skills, cooperation, independence, and responsibility.
Blocks: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* developing motor skills, math concepts (e.g. number, size, shape, space), oral language, social skills, eye-hand coordination, self-control, and my imagination.
Dramatic Play: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* developing social skills, emotional skills, independence, oral language, my imagination, responsibility, and executive functioning.
Library: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* developing alphabet knowledge, oral language, print knowledge, listening skills, eye-hand coordination, concepts about the world, and the desire to read.
Literacy: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* developing letter and sound recognition, and learning sight words, to write, and to comprehend.
Math: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* developing oral language, social skills, small motor skills, concepts about quantity, shape, size, and patterns, and an interest in math.
Science: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* developing a curiosity about the world, sensory skills, problem solving, language skills, and experience with the scientific process (i.e. observing, predicting, experimenting, recording, reporting).
Social Studies: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* learning about maps, my community, the earth and land forms, and cultures.
Writing: *It looks like I am playing, but I am* developing eye-hand coordination, small motor skills, alphabet knowledge, self-confidence, vocabulary, and an interest in print.

Access to Chapter 3270 Child Care Centers: Regulations

MTSD Child Development & Early Learning Programs are licensed child care programs with the Office of Child Development – Department of Public Welfare. Chapter 3270 regulations are available at each program site for parent review. Additionally, parents can contact the regional site for the Office of Child Development & Early Learning directly at 11 Stanwix Street, Suite 240; Pittsburgh PA 15222: 1-800-222-2149. Parents can also access Chapter 3270 regulations electronically at **dhs.pa.gov/providers/Child-Care/Pages/Child-Care-Regulations.aspx**.

Attendance

With exceptions to illness or physical injury, quarantine, death in the family, school sponsored tours and trips, non-school-sponsored education experiences with pre-approval, medical and dental appointments, required court attendance, family emergency, hazardous travel and severe weather conditions, or religious observations, all children are expected to be at school. Our goal is to have children come to school every day especially since missing just one day can seriously impact the learning and experience of the child. Please note the following policy:

- Reporting Absences: If your child will be absent from school, please contact your child's teacher by 8:45 in the morning by leaving a message on the classroom answering machine.
- If your child is absent due to illness or appointments, please be sure to let your child's teacher know.
- If a child is absent without communication from the parent/guardian, the preschool teacher must call to find out why the child is absent.
- Please provide your child's teacher with written excuse on the day your child returns to school.

Emergency / Evacuation Plans & Safety Drills



The Child Development & Early Learning Program Emergency / Evacuation Plan is aligned with the MTSD school safety requirements.

The Emergency / Evacuation Plan uses the Standard Response Protocol to outline what students and staff are to do in an emergency that necessitates a "Hold," "Secure," "Lockdown," "Evacuate," and/or "Shelter" response. The Emergency / Evacuation Plan identifies locations within the school and outside the school to where students are to evacuate if needed in response to an emergency. Also, maps of evacuation routes are located in each program space.

Teachers participate in the Emergency / Evacuation Plan training each school year and when, if needed, the plan is updated throughout the school year. Students and teachers practice emergency drills on a regular basis. Each preschool classroom maintains a list of all drills in which the class has participated.

Extra Clothes

Whether from over exuberant water play or a toileting accident, it is always helpful to have an extra set of clothes at school. Please send an extra set of seasonally correct clothes, including underwear and socks, to school with your child. It would be helpful to have clothes stored in a labeled gallon size Ziploc bag. If your child is wearing Pull-Ups please provide a supply of Pull-Ups and wipes.

Outdoor play happens throughout the school year unless the weather is inclement. Please be sure to dress your child for outdoor play, including coats, hats, boots, gloves, and snow pants, when appropriate. Mark each piece of clothing with your child's name.

Going Outdoors

Students will participate in outdoor activities daily weather permitting. The Pennsylvania Position statement on "weather permitting" states students can participate in outdoor activities daily if the temperature is above 24 degrees with wind-chill. We believe these outdoor experiences are vital to your child's learning experience, and any child well enough to attend school is well enough to participate in outdoor activities.

Health: Student Illnesses, Allergies, & Medications

If your child is ill, please keep him/her home from school. This includes occurrences when your child has a fever, is vomiting, has diarrhea, or has cold symptoms. As you can imagine preschool classrooms are a great place for sharing colds and other germs. Children must be fever and symptom free, without the aid of a fever reducing medicine, for at least 24 hours prior to returning to school. We appreciate your cooperation as we attempt to minimize the spread of illness.

Please make the staff aware if your child has been exposed to or contracted a communicable disease (e.g. chicken pox) as we need to inform other parents. There are medically vulnerable students enrolled in our classes. Also, please make the staff aware of any allergies your child has or develops.

Prescription Medications: If your child must receive prescription medications while at school, a permission form must be completed. The form, available from your child's teacher or the school nurse, must include specific information about the time and dosage of medication to be administered, as well as the physician's signature. All prescriptions must be clearly marked and in the original bottle from the pharmacy.

Health Assessment (Student Physical) & Flu Vaccine

Due to the fact that Millcreek Township School District Preschool Child Development / Pre-K Counts programs operate under the PA Department of Education, as well as under the PA Department of Public Welfare Office of Child Development regulations, all students participating in preschool must have a current (with in the past year) health assessment (physical) on file. Should your child be in need of a physical, you do have 30 days after your child's start date to return the completed and signed physical form to the classroom teacher. Any student who does not have a physical within 30 days of their start date is unable to return to preschool until their physical has been completed and the teacher has the appropriate forms on file. Health Assessments must be completed annually for preschool students.

The Office of Child Development regulations further require participating children provide documentation of having a flu shot or an exemption from the flu shot letter from the parent each school year. Please provide this to your child's teacher.



Inclusion

The MTSD Child Development & Early Learning programs welcome all students in an inclusive environment. Inclusion is defined as "including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities; facilitating individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster development, friendships with peers, and a sense of belonging." (HHS/ED Policy Statement, 2015)



Children of all abilities, needs, backgrounds, cultures, religions, and economic circumstances participate in our programs. We are committed to providing developmentally appropriate experiences that support the access and participation of each child. Families are encouraged and supported to collaborate with staff to ensure each child has the opportunity for optimum success. We communicate with families daily and have meetings as needed. We work with therapists, special educators, and other professionals to integrate accommodations, modifications, and strategies when students need their services. We can help families as they secure additional help and resources. We also work with and accept ELRC funding.

If your child has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), we request you share this with your preschool teacher. We will follow these plans, supporting your child in making sustained and meaningful progress.

Resources for Families

Life can be challenging. If you find yourself struggling, please feel free to call us at 814-836-6090. We will work to connect you to community resources that can help.

Below are some community resource organizations you can contact directly.

- Achievement Center: https://www.achievementctr.org/
  - Provides child-centered and family-focused services in a variety medical and behavioral areas.
- Early Intervention Technical Assistance Portal: http://www.eita-pa.org/

- Provides support for parents with children who participates in an early intervention program.

- Family Services of NW PA: https://www.fsnwpa.org/
  - Provides services for child welfare and behavioral health.
- Northwest Early Learning Resource Center: http://www.nwirelrc.org/Social-Media-and-Links
  - Provides links to family and community services.
- PA Department of Human Services: https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx
  - Provides assistance related to financial needs, medical health care, heating, housing, mental health, crisis, and employment/training programs to qualifying families.
- PA Positive Behavior Support: http://papbs.org/Home.aspx
  - Provides supports to schools and families to create and maintain positive behavior supports and interventions to promote student academic success and social / emotional well-being.

Snacks

Snack is an important part of our school day. Your child will be assigned a snack day monthly. On your child's snack day, we ask you bring a healthy snack to share with your child's class. If you are not able to provide a snack to share with your child's class, please contact our Child Development & Early Learning Program office at 836-6090. If your child has food allergies or if your family has an alternative diet, please make the staff aware of any foods that should be avoided.

Student Success & Classroom Management Plan

Mission and Guiding Belief Statements:

The MTSD Child Development and Early Learning Programs work under the district's overarching mission to provide a high-quality educational experience that prepares the students to reach their potential as life-long learners and responsible citizens. There are five critical belief statements that our program follows and underscores our mission:

- ✓ Families play a critical role in student success.
- ✓ Each student is important and is treated with dignity and respect.
- ✓ All students should have the opportunity to participate in academic programs that are relevant and rigorous.
- ✓ A learning community embraces diversity and allows individuals to achieve their maximum potential.

- ✓ Learning is a life-long experience and does require different approaches.

Working within this mission and these guiding beliefs, the MTSD Child Development and Early Learning Programs envision providing every child the educational experiences he or she needs to be successful in his or her academic career and life.

Setting Students Up for Success:

With the Mission and Guiding Belief Statements in mind, qualified and caring staff provide each child with guidance that helps him/her acquire a positive self-concept and self-control via the following program practices and structures.



Activities / Curriculum / Schedule:

- Activities are developmentally appropriate for whole group, small group, and individual student needs.
- Differentiation occurs based on students' strengths and needs, interests, and learning styles.
- The physical environment and atmosphere are engaging, positive, and respectful.
- Schedules are developmentally appropriate, providing a consistent flow to the children's day that meets their cognitive, social & emotional, and physical needs.
- Each program implements a positive behavior management system aligned with the system used by the school. Characteristics such as responsibility, caring, and team-work are modeled and reinforced on a daily basis.
- The strategies of re-direction, distraction, and active listening to determine the underlying cause of the behavior are utilized when an unacceptable behavior occurs, or is about to occur. (Corporal punishment and shaming are never permitted. Also, discipline shall never be related to food, rest, or toileting.)

As children are learning and developing their social and emotional skills, staff support their growth by ensuring the following:

- Correct behaviors are taught, modeled, coached, and reinforced.
- Behavior guidance is constructive, positive, and suited to the age of the child.
- Interventions are proactive rather than reactive, are minimally intrusive as possible, use positive techniques, and are respectful of the student's human dignity.
- Classroom rules are clear, positive, in child-friendly language, developed with student input, visible, and reinforced.
- Children are encouraged to solve as many of their problems as possible, with staff guidance as necessary. (Physical or emotional danger require immediate staff intervention.)

The overall key behavior expectations for students are:

- Act in ways that promote the physical safety and welfare of children and others.
- Respect of rights, feelings, and property of others.

- Cooperate with other children and adults and follow established consequences.

Additional Supports:

When the above strategies and practices in the 'Setting the Students Up for Success' section do not result in the appropriate behavior, the following may occur based on the nature of the inappropriate behavior:

1. The child may be removed from the activity. The child and staff member will engage in a brief discussion to decide upon a solution to the behavior and how the student can make a better choice the next time s/he finds him/herself in a similar situation. The child is supported as he/she transitions back into the same activity or is redirected to a different activity.
2. Parent and staff conferences may be required to discuss the behavior and establish a plan of action.
3. Occurrences of inappropriate behavior may require staff to complete a Behavior Report which will be reviewed with the parent. The parent, the student, and the staff person will determine if additional supports such as an individualized behavior plan is needed.
4. An individualized behavior plan may be required. The appropriate staff person will gather data regarding the frequency, timing, and context in which the student is engaging in inappropriate behaviors. Working with the appropriate Child Development Personnel and the child's family, a behavior plan will be developed that outlines direct instruction and managed reinforcements that works to decrease / eliminate the child's inappropriate behaviors.
5. A referral to the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit may be made for the possibility of a more formal evaluation to determine if the child needs more support than is available at the MTSD Child Development & Early Learning Programs.
6. Other, as appropriate per the student's needs.

Suspension-Expulsion:

All efforts, as noted above, are made to help ensure student success. In the extremely rare situation when the severity and/or frequency of a child's inappropriate behavior jeopardizes the health, safety, or well-being of him/herself or others within the program, the Child Development & Early Learning Program Supervisor reserves the right to suspend or dismiss a child from the program.

Transitions

Students entering Pre-K can meet their teacher during a Pre-K Open House before the school year starts. During the Open House, the students and their families meet the teacher, get a chance to see and play in their classroom, take a tour of the school, and can ask questions and learn about the upcoming school year.



During the school year, students are increasingly exposed to experiences to help them prepare to move on to Kindergarten. For example, they may eat lunch in the cafeteria with the other students in the school to help them be prepared for this in future years.

Toward the end of the school year, students moving on to Kindergarten the next school year have several opportunities to prepare for their upcoming transition. Students may have the opportunity to meet the Kindergarten teachers and take a tour of their future classrooms. Teachers plan preschool graduation experiences to help the children and their families celebrate their preschool experience and their academic advancement. For students participating in an early intervention program, the Pre-K team meets with the school age team to share information to help ensure the student's success for transitioning to Kindergarten.

Visiting and Volunteering

As is true in all of our schools, Millcreek Township School District asks that all parents check in at the school office when visiting the building. Whether volunteering, observing, or dropping an item off for your child or your child's teacher, proceed to the office first. Once there, sign the visitor's book and obtain a badge to wear.

Throughout the year you may want to volunteer in your child's classroom. Volunteer requirements include current clearances and health assessment w/ TB test. For detailed information regarding how to become a volunteer, refer to the MTSD website – Personnel Department at https://www.mtsd.org/district/departments/personnel. Please keep in mind all of this is done in an effort to keep our students safe and to keep interruptions to the classes to a minimum. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Weather Related Delays, Early Dismissals, & Cancellations

Weather may cause the school district to have a 2-hour delay, an early dismissal, or a school closure. Please follow inclement weather reports on the local TV and radio stations for school delay, dismissal, and closure notifications.

Whatever the district implements, please remember your discretion will best determine your child's attendance during inclement weather.

2-Hour Delays: *(In the event of a 2-hour delay, stay tuned to the TV and radio stations should the school delay change to cancelation due to worsening weather conditions.)*

Pre-K Before School Care (i.e. Full Day Pre-K Students): Will start at, or close to, their normal start times. Be aware the staff may not be there right at 7:00 am given weather and road conditions. Additionally, some parking lots may not be cleared by 7:00 am.

Pre-K Academic Classes (i.e. Half Day Pre-K Students): Will be delayed 2 hours. You can drop your child off 2 hours *after* the normal start time (not at the regular start time).

Early Dismissals:

Pre-K Programs: You, or one of your designated release persons, are to pick up your child from the Pre-K programs as soon as is possible. Road conditions will warrant everyone getting home early.

School Closings:

Pre-K Programs: Should school be canceled after you have signed your child in at a Pre-K Before School Program (i.e. Full Day Pre-K Students), you, or one of your designated release persons, are to pick up your child from school as soon as is possible.



If school is closed, Pre-K programs will not operate at the school. Please refer to the Pre-K Remote Learning Plan as Pre-K students may participate in a virtual learning day.

Thank you for your attention to these important inclement weather procedures.

We welcome you and your child to
our early learning community!
We are looking forward to a terrific school
year with you!

