

Gateway Preschool Parent Handbook



Welcome to Preschool at Gateway Elementary School!

One of the responsibilities of the Woodland Park School District RE-2 is to serve children with all abilities. Our program is designed to be a blended classroom of children ages 3-5 who fall into the following categories: **Special Needs**, **Colorado Preschool Program**, and **Tuition**. Please take a moment to read the following descriptions and prioritized categories for placing children into our program.

- A. **Special Needs:** These children qualify for a preschool program as determined by our district's Child Find Team. A child must fall below the 7th percentile on a standardized evaluation tool in one area of their development (social, motor, speech/language and/or cognitive areas). Preschool for these children is free of charge; this is a federally and state funded program.
- B. **Colorado Preschool Program (CPP):** These are children who do not qualify for special education services; however, they are at risk for learning due to factors such as health, a mild developmental delay, family history of learning problems, crisis in the home, etc. In addition to these examples, a child must be three, four or five years old and not be eligible for kindergarten the current school year. Preschool for these children is free of charge; this is a state funded program.
- C. **Tuition:** These are children who do not qualify for either special needs or CPP. These children are developing typically and pay tuition. Research has proven that there are benefits to having blended classrooms where children with special needs and children developing typically are integrated into the same setting.

Gateway Preschool Program

The Preschool program is Woodland Park School District's Early Intervention Program. There is a preschool program at all three elementary schools. It is a developmentally appropriate preschool for children 3 to 5 years of age, including children with special needs and children who are eligible for the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP).

Highly trained staff works with young children with challenging learning styles. Developmental screenings for children, ages birth through five years are held to identify those who

need further evaluation. Bi-monthly team evaluations will be offered to identify children who need special services provided by the school district.

Gateway Preschool Program Philosophy

*****WE RECOGNIZE** the importance of play as a basis of all learning experiences for young children

*****WE RECOGNIZE** the philosophy of "active learning": children learn by manipulating objects, exploring with all of their senses, and interacting with people and materials.

*****WE BELIEVE** in providing a positive learning environment where children are encouraged to actively engage in all aspects of play. They have the opportunity to learn and discover skills necessary for social interaction as well as develop positive self-esteem.

*****WE STRIVE** to meet the needs of individual children with concerns for their interests, abilities, special talents, and developmental levels.

*****WE ENCOURAGE** each child's creativity, curiosity, initiative, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities.

*****WE SUPPORT** each child's ability to use language effectively to meet his/her needs and communicate with others. We also promote independence by concentrating on self-help skills.

*****WE ESTABLISH** realistic goals and expectations for each child's developmental level, which will help them, to be successful in preschool. Our child-based curriculum will encourage a love for learning that will last a lifetime!

Classroom Placement

When placing children into a class we must take several factors into consideration:

**Boy/Girl Ratio

**Balancing of CPP, Special Education, and Tuition

**Age ratio (Peer Modeling)

We will try to honor your first choice; however, the above items will be the final factor in determining into which session your child is placed. Thank you for your understanding!

*If you have questions regarding the placement of your child, please contact the Preschool Director (Ashley Lawless) at 686-2053.

Daily Routine

Preschool children thrive when a consistent routine is provided. This helps them to gain an understanding of time and routine. Below is our daily routine that we follow each day with the children:

Arrival: Children say good-bye to the parent and put their belongings away. Independence is encouraged. They then select table toys or books to read and wait for their classmates to arrive.

Opening Circle: Children sing a greeting, review calendar and weather, and choose center areas. There will be a story for the theme of the week.

Some of this time is utilized to "think about what we are going to do for center time."

Students are introduced to what activities are available and they choose where they will work that day.

Center Time: Children will explore the centers with adult support.

Clean up: Children clean-up classroom.

Small groups: Children talk to staff about what they did during work time. There also will be counting, games, songs, graphing, pre-math, classification, matching letters, numbers, colors, shapes, etc. This is an important time for language development; during this time children should speak 80% of the time and teachers 20%.

Specials: A time for music, art and large motor activities.

Snack: Children wash hands (independently) and serve themselves (pour own juice, spread own peanut butter, etc.) as directed. We use this opportunity to encourage social interaction and try to tie snack in with our theme.

Outside/Recess: Children have free time to run and play.

Pack Up/Dismissal: Children retrieve their belongings from their cubbies, as independently as possible (zippers, too!) and are generally dismissed to an outdoor recess to wait for pick-up/dismissal.

Classroom Rules

These are the rules of our classroom that are reinforced throughout the school year. We have a board in the room (with pictures) and we use it often to remind the children of these rules, especially when a child is following a rule nicely or if a rule is violated. We also ask the children questions such as: "Is that a good choice?" or "What would be a better choice?" to help foster responsible thinking.

Healthy Snacks for Young Children

We believe that healthy, nutritious snacks are vital to a child's growth and development. We make an effort to offer one fruit or vegetable, one dairy product, and one snack in which your child must spread/assemble his or her own snack on a weekly basis. Encouraging independence, improving understanding of language concepts, and increasing self-help skills and small motor development are important parts of snack time. This is also a fun time for social interaction where appropriate exchanges of communication are encouraged.

Our snack calendar will be sent home monthly. The children will be served a healthy snack each day. Reference the tuition and fee section regarding snack fees, which are collected no later than the first school day of each month and are strongly encouraged to be paid ahead of time, per semester or annually.

Our full day students may purchase a hot lunch or bring their own from home. If they are bringing lunch from home we ask that you not send candy.

Your child may qualify for free meals. You need to complete one application (available in the front office) for all your students in your household. They can't approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information. Return the completed application to Cathy Mula (719-686-2018)

Toilet Training

We encourage you to be working with your child on toilet training. We will gladly take part in any training program you have at home; upon your request, we will happily remind children to use the toilet and be sure they go (once a day, hourly, at your request). We strongly encourage independence in the bathroom with both toileting and hand washing. In general, our policy is to monitor bathroom activity; we will not assist unless a student verbally requests help. We will cue students to ask for help, as necessary. If a child has an accident, he/she will be expected to change his/her own clothes with as little help as possible. We will monitor this process, and step in only if absolutely necessary. We also recommend sending your child in Velcro or zipper shoes to give them more independence. If your child is still wearing diapers or pull-ups, you will be expected to supply these items, as well as wipes, for your child. Please talk with a staff member regarding

toileting issues, and meet with us on a regular basis so we can keep up with your latest expectations. Thank you!

Supervision and Written Closure Procedures

Preschool children are closely supervised at all times by Woodland Park School District staff members. A qualified preschool Director and/or group leader is always present. Others who may be present in our classroom are parent volunteers, students from the upper grades, therapists affiliated with the school district, and occasional observers. Only WPSD staff members are responsible for the safety and primary instruction of preschool students; therefore, at least one staff member is required to be present with volunteers.

A head count of the children will be taken at the beginning of each day, and several times throughout the day, including, but not limited to: going outside, coming inside, and before and after any times the class has traveled to another part of the building.

At the end of each preschool session and playground time, the following procedures will be followed by the teacher and paraeducator:

- (1) The playground area will be checked to make sure that all of the children are inside the classroom.
- (2) The bathroom and classroom centers will be checked to assure that all children are present.
- (3) When all the children are ready for dismissal, a head count will be taken to make sure all are present. If any child is missing, the teacher or paraeducator will check the playground, bathrooms, and classroom.
- (4) If the child is not found, necessary steps under emergency procedures will be followed (see that page in this handbook).
- (5) Staff will make a daily check of the room and bathrooms before leaving for the day to make sure that all children have left.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Any caregiver or staff member in a child care facility who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or has observed that child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect must immediately report or cause a report to be made.

A parent or caregiver should report suspected child abuse or neglect at the preschool program to the Preschool Director (Teacher), the Gateway Elementary Principal or the school counselor.

You may also notify the Teller County Department of Social Services at 687-3355 or the Teller County sheriff's Office at 687-9652.

The American with Disabilities Act

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex national origin, age and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications. The ADA went into effect in January 1992.

The ADA Mandates that equal access be given to all children with disabilities in preschool programs and that children with disabilities be fully integrated into the regular activities. The law not only covers the facility where the preschool is offered, but also which features are needed to access the facility such as sidewalks, doors and bathrooms. However, providers are not expected to do the impossible.

Preschools are required to make "readily achievable accommodations" for all children with disabilities. "Readily achievable" is defined as being "able to accomplish easily and without much difficulty or expense." Programs are not required to make changes that would create an undue burden, which is most simply defined as creating significantly difficulty or expense, or increasing safety or crime considerations"

Student Arrival/Departure

For the protection of your child and due to state licensure requirements, parents and caregivers **MUST sign their child **IN** and **OUT** of school each day. Children will only be released to parents or another adult with **prior** written authorization from the parents (unless that adult is listed as an "Emergency Contact" on the Enrollment Form).

**Preschool students should be brought into the classroom upon arrival and signed in. We encourage a brief goodbye, as this helps your child develop his/her self-help skills and independence in getting ready for the day. Often, we will be on the playground at dismissal, and you may also sign your child out from there.

**If your child attends day care and will be dropped off or picked up by the day care, please let the teacher know and provide the name of the daycare.

**If a parent does not pick up a child by the designated time the child will be taken to the office to wait for his/her ride. If nobody comes within 10 minutes, the parents and the emergency contacts will be called.

Attendance Policy

The opening of each school day is very important. Soon after arrival we will have our opening circle time where we greet each other and discuss the activities for the day. Please help to ensure that your child is receiving an opportunity to participate in this very important part of the day by bringing him/her to school **ON TIME**. Thank you.

If your child will be absent, it is important to call the preschool office at 686-2053, or call the front office at 686-2051 to let us know. Messages may be left at both numbers, and staff will check messages upon arrival. If we do not hear from you and your child is found to be absent, expect a phone call as a safety measure. Thank you for your understanding.

Birthday Celebrations

You are welcome to send in special birthday treats for all the children on your child's birthday or the closest school day. We encourage healthy treats, for example fruit kabobs, muffins, frozen yogurt, or other items low in sugar content. We also allow cupcakes, ice cream, and cookies, of course. Please let us know ahead of time which day you plan to bring in birthday treats so we can plan accordingly. Thank you for your cooperation.

To File a Complaint about the Preschool Program

If a parent wishes to file a complaint about the Preschool, please see the Director/Teacher or Gateway Elementary School Principal. You may directly contact the state licensing office at: Colorado Department of Human Services, 1575 Sherman Street, Denver, Colorado 80203-1714, (303) 866-5958 or toll free 800 799-5876

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences will be held twice a year: once in the fall and once in the spring. At these times, parents/caregivers will have a 20-minute time period to discuss their child's growth and development with the teacher. This is a wonderful time to share success stories and to let your child's teacher know what goals you personally have for your child.

In addition to these conferences, the teacher will make parents aware of any daily events that raise concern. If needed, a meeting will be scheduled at the convenience of both the parents and the teacher to discuss such concerns.

Gateway Preschool Program Curriculum

Gateway Preschool uses a blended approach, including such curriculum as Teaching Strategies Gold, Get Set for School (Handwriting Without Tears), Little Treasures (literacy), Every day in PreK (math), Developmentally Appropriate Practice, and other published curricula. This approach to early childhood education encourages children to actively initiate their own learning experiences. The teaching adult's role is to create the conditions for the children's active learning. Adults therefore, support, guide, and challenge children who are engaged in productive, problem-solving focused learning activities. The active learning approach includes five principal ingredients: 1. Materials: a variety of interesting materials that are readily accessible to children; 2. Manipulation: children are free to handle, explore, and work with materials; 3. Choice: children have opportunities to set their own goals and select materials and activities; 4. Language from the children: children communicate, verbally and nonverbally; 5. 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, by joining their play, and by helping them to learn to solve problems that arise. The learning concepts targeted throughout the year include: language/literacy, music/movement, classification, numbers, space, and time.

Gateway Preschool prides itself on our strong emphasis on communication. We insist on communication, and prompt as needed, when students need help, have a request, or have something to tell. We also emphasize appropriate articulation of speech. We encourage manners as students serve themselves at snack, and maintain high but reasonable expectations of student behavior and performance throughout the curriculum and daily routine.

Discipline and Behavior Management Strategies

Behavior management in the Gateway Preschool program is positive and re-directive. Children are treated with dignity and respect. There is a strong emphasis on positive reinforcement of appropriate behavior ("catch the children being good") and encouraging the children to use their problem solving abilities to resolve conflicts. Some guidelines for behavior management in our program are:

IGNORE inappropriate behavior that seems to occur solely to get attention or may be resolved between the children themselves.

REDIRECT a child to a similar, appropriate activity; tell him what he may do. If necessary, gently lead him or her away from the problem situation.

REINFORCE appropriate behavior when it occurs. Make comments about specific behavior, such as "Good! You are using the blocks to make a tower!" (Instead of throwing them).

REMOVAL or restraint strategies might be used when a child is in danger to him/herself or others, and then only by a staff member. The child will be provided with a safe place to regain control of him or herself and talk through the situation with the teacher and other child if appropriate.

Our goal is to provide an environment where children feel safe and secure so that learning can be a continuing process!

Emergency Closing

Our district Emergency Closing policy includes a Two Hour Delayed Start time. This means that if adverse weather conditions appear to be developing (or have occurred overnight), the start of school may be delayed for two hours. Local stations will be informed by 5:45 a.m. that the starting time for district schools will be delayed by two hours. If a two-hour delay has been determined, the morning preschool classes will be cancelled due to extremely short instructional time. Afternoon classes will still be held.

The purpose of the two-hour delay is to determine if school will close for the remainder of the day. If a decision is made to cancel school, area radio and television stations will be informed by 7:45 a.m. If school is cancelled for the day, all afternoon preschool classes will be cancelled.

In the event of an early release, (school is in session but hazardous conditions develop during the day and a decision may be made to dismiss students early), local radio and television stations will be notified no later than 11:30 a.m. Morning PAL classes will remain at school as scheduled, and afternoon classes will be cancelled.

*****PARENTS SHOULD USE THEIR OWN JUDGEMENT IN SENDING STUDENTS TO SCHOOL WHEN SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS EXIST.*****

Procedure for Emergencies

In the event of a fire, the children will be removed from the classroom in a calm and orderly manner. We will exit the classroom using the outside exit ("back") door. The classroom teacher will guide the children outside while the classroom paraeducator checks the classroom for children. Once outside, the teacher will do a role call and mark that all children are present.

In the event of a tornado or other drastic weather conditions, the class will follow specific directions from the school principal as to what to do to maintain safety.

In the horrific event that a child becomes lost, a complete search of the building and grounds will be made. The Woodland Park Police Department will be contacted if the child is not found after this search. At this point, the child's parents will be contacted immediately.

Field Trips

We will occasionally take a field trip to local events in our community when it relates to our current curriculum theme. Written notification of an activity away from the school grounds will be given at least one week in advance. Parental permission for all field trips, emergency contacts, and medical release is indicated on the registration form in each child's record. Copies of these forms are in a field trip folder that accompanies our class for each activity. In addition, a field trip permission slip will come home for each trip, and **MUST** be returned to school indicating parent permission to attend. If a child is not permitted or unable to attend a school field trip, alternate supervision is **NOT** available when the class leaves the school grounds.

Due to the changes in car seat and child-restraint laws, transportation will always be arranged through Durham Transportation Services, and a professional bus driver will be used. As seatbelts are not available on these busses, children will be monitored to sit appropriately on the bus by staff. State law does not require safety restraints in vehicles larger than fifteen passenger. If you are uncomfortable with your child riding the school bus, you are always welcome to transport your child in your own vehicle and follow the bus. Such arrangements must be made ahead of time with the teacher.

District insurance policy prohibits younger siblings from riding on any district vehicle. We ask that you please find alternative care for siblings if you plan to volunteer on our field trip whether you ride the bus or provide your own transportation. This is to assure that the children in the preschool classes have our undivided attention and supervision.

If a child arrives late to school and the class is already gone, a parent may drive his/her child and meet us at our final destination.

Health Policies

The Gateway Preschool Program is licensed through the State of Colorado and requires that a child must have updated immunization forms on file before entering school. This preschool accepts non-immunized children due to medical, religious, or personal beliefs but, an exemption form from the school nurse **must** be signed. A physical exam signed by a doctor must be completed each year. In addition to these forms we will need a copy of your child's birth certificate for our records.

PARENTS are asked to assume the responsibility of keeping a child at home if there is any doubt about the child's ability to fully participate in the activities at school due to an illness. Signs of illness include: **green nasal discharge, sneezing and coughing, sore throat, fever (100 degrees), vomiting, unidentified skin rash, loose bowel movements, and unusual fatigue or irritability.** A child should be free of all symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school.

Whenever your child has been exposed to a communicable disease (chicken pox, strep, head lice) please report this to the teacher!

If it becomes necessary for a child to take any form of MEDICATION at school, these steps must be followed:

1. Written permission by parents giving the school district direct authorization to assist with the medication.
2. A written order from your physician stating the name of the medication, dosage, and times to be given.
3. Medication must be in the original labeled container; all medications will be kept in the nurse's office.

All of the previous policies are critical to the well being of our children and staff. A child should be ready to participate in the full school program, including outdoor play, when returning after an illness. We are unable to supervise one or two children indoors during outside playtime so we will be unable to honor such requests. Your cooperation is essential to the health of our children!

In the event that your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you to come and pick up your child. In the event of an injury, accident, or emergency, you will be notified with written documentation. If the injury is serious enough that medical intervention is necessary you will be called immediately.

Gateway Preschool Hours of Operation

The Gateway Preschool $\frac{1}{2}$ day program runs Monday through Thursday, with two daily sessions and our full day program is five full days.

Gateway Preschool follows the school district calendar. Please note that $\frac{1}{2}$ day Preschool begins one week later and ends one week earlier (refer to WPSD Re-2 calendar). Please check the school calendar for important dates to remember throughout the year.

Personal Belongings & Space

Active indoor and outdoor play is a regular part of our day! Please dress your child in clothing and shoes that are suitable for running, climbing, and other vigorous activity.

We will be outside for a part of each day, unless the weather is extremely cold or hot, or if it is raining. Our playground gets wet, snowy, muddy, and can stay this way from October to May. **PLEASE send your child with clothing and footwear appropriate to the weather!!** We strongly discourage sandals, open-toed, and slip-on shoes, as our playground surface is primarily pea gravel, and your child may spend the entire recess taking off and putting on his/her shoes.

Each day may include "messy" activities with paint, markers, glue, clay, water, etc., so clothing should be easy to launder. Each child will need a change of clothing to keep at school: shirt, pants, socks, underwear. Please label your child's clothes and put them in a large Ziploc bag with your child's name **clearly** marked on each clothing item and the bag. We encourage parents to

be mindful of the changing seasons and their "accident" clothes here at school—we hesitate to put shorts/short sleeves on a child in winter, but it may be all we have. We appreciate parents keeping this in mind.

Children are encouraged to help themselves with dressing and undressing. All clothing should be of a type that can be managed without too much difficulty for the little, inexperienced fingers. This is especially helpful to manage toileting skills independently. Thank you for your help!

Toys, money and other items are strongly encouraged to be kept safely at home so they do not get lost or broken. If anything unnecessary should find its way to school, your child will be required to keep that item in his/her book bag, which is hung in his/her cubby for the duration of the day.

Tuition and Fees

The cost to attend Gateway Preschool is determined whether or not your child is half day or full day. Payment is due the first school day of each month. A late payment charge of \$10 will be added which has not been paid before the tenth of the month. Our flat fee takes into consideration the number of holidays, snow days, and allowed absences. Nine payments are due starting with September and ending with May. Please make checks payable to Woodland Park School District RE-2 and please add your child's name as your memo.

Snack/Supply fee will be collected to provide a healthy, uniform snack for the class. We encourage parents to pay ahead of time, several months or the whole year. (See attached fee schedule for the current school year)

Television and Video Watching

The preschool program uses multi-media such as television, films, and videotapes as follows:

***Viewing is limited to developmentally appropriate programming that has been previewed by adults prior to use.

***Staff discusses material viewed with children to develop critical viewing skills.

***Multimedia are used as special events, rather than regular daily routines.

***We occasionally video the children during special events or during work time and then show them to the children. These videos must remain at school and are not permitted to be taken outside the classroom.

Our Video policies are in alignment with those of WPSD RE-2. Videos will always align with curriculum, standards, and/or lesson plans.

Visitors

Visitors are welcome in preschool anytime, but you must schedule 24 hours in advance with a staff member and the front office before you plan to visit.

If parents will be spending time in the classroom (reading a book, helping set up for a party, helping students with an activity, etc.) we require that you sign our visitors log. Please sign in at the front office prior to coming to preschool. If you will be moving around the building, be sure to get a visitor's sticker from the front office staff. This procedure will be the same for picking up a student early: please enter through the front of the building, showing your preschool badge to the front office staff, and signing your child out in preschool. Thank you for your understanding.

Withdrawal of Your Child from Preschool

If you choose to withdraw your child from the preschool program, we ask that you give two weeks' notice. Due to the consideration of those children on our waiting list, we ask that you let us know as soon as possible if your child will be exiting the program. If you do not give two weeks' notice, you will be responsible for paying two weeks' worth of tuition.

Policies and Procedures 2019-2020

Gateway Preschool Program

Gateway Elementary School

Agreement between Parents and the Gateway Preschool Program:

1. Our ½ day Preschool Program meets on Monday-Thursday. Morning session is from 7:35-10:35, and afternoon session is from 11:45-2:45. Please make arrangements for your child to arrive and leave on time. Attendance is taken 15 minutes after arrival. The time periods before and after class are critical for the teacher to set up the environment, plan curriculum, attend staff meetings, and prepare for your child's arrival. Supervision of children is not available before 7:35 (½ day AM) or 11:45 (½ day PM), or after 10:35 (½ day AM) or 2:45 (½ day PM). Ten minutes after dismissal a staff member will walk your child to the front office to wait for you if your child is not picked up on time.
2. Full Day Preschool Program meets Monday-Friday. This session is from 7:35-2:55, with attendance taken at 7:50. Ten minutes after dismissal a staff member will walk your child to the front office to wait for you if your child is not picked up on time.
3. The parent or caregiver who personally transports a child to and from the preschool program must sign that child in and out each day with a full signature. Any alternate transportation plan must be reported in advance to the preschool staff and if possible be written on the daily sign-in form.
4. Our preschool program will follow the Woodland Park School District calendar with the following exceptions: all preschool classes start on August 21, 2019 and all preschool classes end on May 21, 2020.
5. Please note: if the Woodland Park School District has a two-hour delay due to inclement weather, morning ½ day preschool class will be cancelled.

6. Children who become ill may not remain in the classroom and a parent will be called to take the child home. Please review the health policies in your handbook.
7. We encourage you to participate in your child's preschool program. Please complete the parent volunteer form so we are aware of how you would like to participate. We have our Preschool Parent Group meetings scheduled for the first Thursday of every month at 7:45 am in the Panther Den. We will also send out friendly reminders and emails regarding ways to support our program throughout the year.
8. We ask children to leave toys/personal belongings at home, unless they are the V.I.P. for the week. (You will be given a note or dojo message when it is your child's turn.) This will help to avoid loss or breakage. Educational items that go along with our themes are always welcome for the children to bring in to show to the class.
9. The preschool staff is legally required to report suspected abuse or neglect of children. Any parent may report suspected abuse or neglect, or file a complaint. Phone numbers to do this are posted in the classroom.

1. District Preschool Tuition Fees:

½ Day Class – \$1,800 school year made in 9 payments*

Full Day Class – \$4,050 school year made in 9 payments*

If your child receives tuition assistance from the *Colorado Preschool Program or receives Special Services through a Special Education Program, tuition is as follows:

½ Day Program – \$180.00 made in 9 payments*: to pay for snack fees

Full Day Program – \$2,250 made in 9 payments*: to pay for the second half of the day and snack fees.

Fee Schedule available.

First payment due by the first day of school.

Applications for tuition assistance through the Colorado Preschool Program are available in the elementary office or from the Preschool Director; please call 686-2199.

Qualifications for "Free and Reduced Meals" only covers breakfast and/or lunch; it does not cover any snack fees.

