Message to Parents

Dear Parents,

The first day of school is most important for you and your child. Entering Preschool signals the beginning of new and exciting experiences for your child. Our Preschool teachers provide your child with many learning activities that will meet his/her individual needs.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact any of the school administrators or your child’s teacher. We encourage parents to become involved in our schools, becoming partners in their child’s education. We hope your child’s experience is a pleasant and enjoyable one.

Families

*Strong families have been a principal source of our country’s success in the past, and they will play an essential part in improving the quality of our schools and our communities, and ensuring that what our children learn will carry them to a successful future.*

Strong Families, Strong Schools, U.S. Department of Education

The Worcester Public Schools early childhood program strengthens, complements, and extends experiences which begin in the home. The early childhood program offers families and teachers the opportunity to establish a relationship based on mutual confidence and respect. This partnership helps each to understand more clearly the behavior, growth and adjustment of the child. A home-school partnership will contribute to a positive school experience.

Volunteer Opportunities

Family members are encouraged to become involved in their child’s educational experience. Each school offers many opportunities to help in the building or classroom. Contact your child’s teacher or the building principal to find out how you can become involved.

*Some opportunities might be:*

- chaperoning a field trip
- reading in the classroom
- assisting with classroom projects or activities
- sharing your cultural heritage, talent, occupation
- working at home on materials for the classroom (under the teacher's direction)
- participating in the parent association
- serving as a member of the school site council

Communication

If your child experiences an unusual event (family crisis, loss of a loved one or pet) that upsets your child, tell your child’s teacher or send a short note to ensure that your child receives the extra tender loving care needed.

Your Child and the Classroom

*...a high quality early childhood program provides a safe and nurturing environment that promotes physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of young children while responding to the needs of families.*

National Association for the Education of Young Children

Philosophy

The Worcester Public Schools early childhood programs strengthen, complement and extend experiences that begin at home. We offer families and teachers the opportunity to establish a relationship based on mutual confidence and respect. This partnership helps each to understand more clearly the behavior, growth and adjustments of the child. A home-school linkage will then contribute to a positive school experience.

We recognize that the young child grows and learns at his/her own rate in a safe, nurturing, developmentally appropriate environment. Our early childhood programs provide opportunities for socialization, creative activities and emotional, physical
and cognitive development. Constructive play activities that are child-initiated and teacher-facilitated are the
primary vehicles of meaningful learning experiences. Through a classroom that promotes the development of positive personal relationships and utilizes a variety of hands-on experiences, children gain confidence in their ability to explore, question, discover, solve problems, integrate knowledge, think critically and take risks. The Worcester Public Schools believe that quality early childhood education programs will ensure the healthy growth of a future generation and provide the foundation for lifelong learning.

**Curriculum**
The Preschool curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate practices which attend to the needs, interests and developmental levels of preschool children. The curriculum is an interactive process which promotes learning through concrete, play-oriented activities and experiences.

**Goals**
*The family will...*
- be recognized as the child’s first teacher
- work in partnership with the early childhood staff
- enable their children to become successful learners

*The children will...*
- be treated as equals with affection and respect
- be treated as individuals and encouraged to develop at their own rate
- be encouraged to become independent and self-sufficient learners be exposed to various approaches for effective communication with one another
- be encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves and others

*The classroom will...*
- be child-centered with teacher-facilitated experiences derived from the children’s interests and curiosities
- be designed so that all children will experience success and feel comfortable, safe, secure and accepted by others
- provide daily opportunities for experiential learning and hands on activities

**Worcester Public Schools Policies**
*The Worcester Public Schools provides learners with a quality education in a safe and healthy environment. We believe that all students can achieve at high levels as they prepare to become productive citizens in our changing technological world. We are committed to supporting students, parents, educators, and citizens in their pursuit of lifelong learning.***

**Types of Programs**
In an effort to meet the needs of families, Worcester Public Schools offers morning and afternoon, half day preschool programs. The Parent Information Center, located at 768 Main Street, will assist you in choosing the program which best meets your child's individual needs.

**Punctuality**
Your child must be brought to the classroom and picked up from the classroom *at the designated time*. In the case of a severe emergency which might delay you, the school must be notified immediately.

**When your child is sick...**

**WHEN SHOULD I KEEP MY CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL**

Below is the full list of possible COVID symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children before sending them to school:

Please **STAY HOME** and test for COVID (home test or PCR) if your child has the following:

- Fever (100.0°F Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat when in combination with other symptoms
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea when in combination with other symptoms
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

Other (non-COVID) reasons to stay home:
- A diagnosis of flu (influenza) with fever. Your child can return to school once they have no fever for 24 hours without the use of tylenol or ibuprofen.
- A diagnosis of strep throat. Your child should remain at home until they have no fever for 24 hours, and at least 12 hours after starting antibiotics.
- If your child has vomited during the previous night or in the morning.
- If your child has diarrhea during the previous night or in the morning.
- If your child has a moist productive cough, chest congestion or thick nasal drainage.
- If your child has a red or swollen eye that itches and has a yellow drainage, until your child is under treatment.
- If your child has live head lice, until they have been treated.
- Please contact the school nurse if your child has a contagious infection such as COVID-19, strep or flu, head lice, chicken pox, pink-eye, ringworm, impetigo or scabies.

CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL?

Is your child positive for COVID-19?
- Has your child had a fever of 100.0 degrees or more in the past 24 hours?
- Has your child had acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) in the past 24 hours?

If you answered NO to all 3 questions above, your child can return to school.

If you answered YES to any of these questions above, your child CAN NOT return to school. If your child is COVID positive - your child must stay home according to the latest guidelines. Please contact your school nurse directly for guidance on a return to school date.

HOW ELSE CAN I KEEP MY CHILD HEALTHY?

- Vaccinate: Make sure that everybody in your family is up to date with their flu and Covid vaccines. These vaccines are safe and make a difference!
- Hand Wash: Practice good hand-washing with soap and water, or use of hand sanitizer frequently.
- Cough Etiquette:
  - Remind your child to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough and sneeze into their elbows.
  - Masking is no longer required outside the health offices. However, please consider having your child wear a mask in school if they have a cough or other respiratory symptoms.
Absences
It is important that your child attend school regularly to help establish the important role of being a learner. However, if your child is ill, it is best to keep him/her at home. Often a day or two of quiet and rest will help him/her recover quickly. When your child returns to school after being absent, please send the teacher a note explaining the reason for his/her absence.

Schedules
A typical day in preschool includes: opportunities to learn and discover in learning centers, circle or meeting times, social mealtimes, indoor and outdoor physical activities, music and art experiences.

Breakfast and/or Lunch
Breakfast and/or lunch is available at no cost in all of our schools. Additional information will be forwarded to you during the first week of school.

Nutritional Foods
Good nutrition will be emphasized in the classroom. We ask you to reinforce this by sending healthy snacks/lunches with your child. Your child’s teacher will be happy to offer suggestions.

Belongings
Please...
- label your child’s belongings e.g., clothing, lunchbox, backpack... to avoid confusion
- dress you child in comfortable play clothes which allows him/her to participate in a variety of active learning experiences
- send in a complete change of clothing in a labeled plastic bag

Toys
Bringing toys from home is discouraged. Many age-appropriate learning materials are available in the classrooms.

Notices/Newsletters
Pre-school teachers send home notices and/or newsletters regularly. These communications will keep you informed of school and classroom needs and activities, ways you can help your child and opportunities for family involvement.

Parent Bulletin Board
Most schools have a Parent Bulletin Board located near or in the pre-school classroom which contains information and announcements relative to pre-school or building events. Please check this board regularly. Visiting the classroom and viewing the board provide opportunities for sharing amongst the pre-school parents.

Dismissals
Please notify your child’s teacher in writing if your child is to be picked up by someone other than yourself. If you wish to have your child dismissed early, please stop at the office and meet your child there.

Visitors, Please Report to the Office!
For the safety of all our children, visitors to the school (including parents) must stop at the office and sign the guest book.

Transition to Kindergarten
- If your child is remaining in the school in which he/she attends preschool, you do not need to register for Kindergarten unless your child attends preschool at the Worcester Technical High School.
- If your child will be transferring to another school in the Worcester Public Schools system for Kindergarten, you must go to the Parent Information Center at 768 Main Street to complete a registration form. Kindergarten registration begins in January. It is to your child’s advantage that you register before April, allowing you ample time to visit the schools of choice, and in June, be able to attend the Early Childhood Open House and become familiar with the school, classroom and staff.
Getting Ready /or the First Day

The following activities will help you and your child make a smooth transition from home to school:

- Visit your child’s school and classroom with your child.
- Take your child for a walk or ride by his/her school several times during the summer.
- Be positive about school and all the new things your child will be learning.
- Discuss some of the new activities or experiences your child can look forward to:
  - meeting new friends
  - painting, block building, cooking, singing, story time, snack time...
  - sharing toys and games with other children
  - reading many new books, poems and chants with the teacher
  - bringing his/her snack, lunch and personal belongings in a new backpack or school bag
  - sharing with the family all the exciting new things he/she is learning in school

Each day...

- start the day with your child and make the routine of getting ready for school a happy one
- provide or make arrangements for nutritious snacks and meals
- encourage your child to talk about his/her day
- reinforce pride in your child’s projects/activities by posting them in a special place in your home
- praise and encourage your child
- read to your child at least 20 minutes a day
- model reading and writing activities i.e., read the newspaper, books, magazines and write notes, shopping lists, letters
- discuss with your child the importance of sharing, friendship and good behavior
- start and end your child’s day with a big smile, hug and kiss

You may have tangible wealth untold; Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.

Richer than I you can never be —

Adapted from a quote by Strickland Gillilan
PlACES TO TAKE YOUR CHILD

As you continue your role as your child’s first teacher, it is important to continue doing routine family errands (i.e., grocery shopping, banking…) with your child. In addition, you might like to explore some of the places listed below. Most provide free or inexpensive activities for young children.

* The Public Library - to check out books and attend story hours
  www.worcpublib.org

  Main Branch
  Salem Square
  508-799-1655

  Greendale/Francis Perkins Branch
  470 W. Boylston Street
  508-799-1687

  Great Brook Valley Branch
  87 Tacoma Street
  508-799-1729

* EcoTarium
  222 Harrington Way
  508-929-2700
  www.ecotarium.org

* The Worcester Art Museum
  55 Salisbury Street
  508-799-4406

* Elm Park - playground

* YMCA
  Greendale Branch
  75 Shore Drive
  508-852-6694

  Central Community Branch
  766 Main Street
  508-755-6101

  YWCA
  1 Salem Square
  508-791-3181

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