



Preschool Parent Handbook

Welcome to preschool!

Esko Early Learning Preschool is a 4-star Parent Aware rated program for children 3 to 5 years of age. This program, through age-appropriate curriculum, prepares children to enter into kindergarten with the necessary skills, behavior and stability they need to flourish and progress. Our preschool is located in the Esko Education Center, 16 E Hwy 61, next door to the main Esko School building. The program is staffed by qualified licensed teachers.

Our Early Learning Philosophy is that kids are confident, happy, healthy, adjusted, socialized, and independent little people. Confidence is key! We use a play-based approach when it comes to teaching young children. Our belief is that a child's work is play, and through play children develop social, emotional, cognitive, and motor skills.

What classes we offer

We run four sessions of preschool through Esko Community Education.

We offer one three-year-old class. Students must be three years of age on or before September 1st. This class meets on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Students must be toilet trained before the first day of class.

In addition, we have three 4 year old classes. There are two sections of School Readiness; one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Both four year old classes run on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. We have added a new STEM focused class called Discovery that can run in addition to, or separate from, our general School Readiness class. Students must be toilet trained before the first day of class.

All four of the classes run for 2.5 hours each class period. Students must be four years of age on or before September 1st to attend the School Readiness or Discovery class.

Program Standards

Our preschool programming and staff are approved by the Esko Public School Board. Our teachers are licensed with a Bachelor degree in Education, and have many years of experience working in a preschool setting. All staff are required to be CPR and first aid certified.

We maintain a two staff to twenty children ratio.

Outside

Students must be prepared to go outside every day. We will go outside regardless of if your child is prepared or not. We do not carry extra outdoor items. Please check the weather each day to determine what children need.

Arrival

Please be timely in dropping off your child. Our staff need time to prepare the room, so we will not be opening the entrance door until the very beginning of class. You are welcome to wait in the lobby area until the teacher opens the door for class. The teacher will then have the children line up, separating from their adult who dropped them off, and walking them back to the classroom.

Departure

Some children get quite nervous if all the children are picked up and their parent has not arrived yet for pick up. *Please make sure to arrive to pick your child up prior to class dismissal.* If no one picks up the child within 5 minutes of class dismissal, we will begin calling the parents. If we cannot reach one of the parents, we will begin calling their emergency contacts. Our staff need the time after class to clean up and prepare for their next class. If you arrive late, not only does this add stress to your child's day, but it takes away from time needed for staff prep. Thank you for making every effort to arrive on time when picking up at the end of class.

Correspondence

We have multiple ways we communicate with parents. It is very important that parents monitor all communication routes.

Our first, and most common route of connecting with parents, is through email. Please check your email daily to keep up to date on class happenings and parent/teacher correspondence.

The second method of correspondence is our daily folders. Parents are required to provide a communication folder (a two-pocket folder with prongs inside). This folder is used regularly for teachers to send messages home after class, and to send projects home for your child to share with you. It is very important that parents monitor this folder each day after class to keep up with school happenings.

We are working on adding an app to our programming to connect more instantly shall we need to communicate during class time.

Authorization to pick up child

No child will be released to a person not authorized by a parent to pick up the child. If you have a new person picking up your child, not on the emergency pick up list, we will need a note stating that you approve this pick up.

If someone attempts to pick your child up who is unauthorized or incapacitated, we will immediately attempt to call you. Please ensure that we have always updated phone numbers for you. If we cannot reach you, we will call 911.

Emergency Closing or Dismissal

When Esko schools are closed due to severe weather, or emergency, School Readiness will also close. If there is a 2 hour late start for Esko schools, we will close for both morning and afternoon preschool classes. If Esko school releases early, our program will also be dismissed at that time. (ex. If they send out an alert that school will be closing at 1pm, due to weather conditions, we will also close at 1pm)

If *more than 2* days are canceled, due to Esko school closings, we will make up one additional day at the end of the school year.

General Health, Illness or Emergency

In an instance of severe illness or injury the staff will take your child to the nurse and will notify parents. At other times, staff will make an evaluation and contact the parents. **DO NOT** bring a sick child to school. Students must be fever free for 24 hours without medication before they can return to school. This not only does not benefit your child, but it helps inhibit the spread of germs and illness.

Children who receive minor injuries will be given first aid and the parent will be notified when picking up the child.

In the event of an emergency, parents will be notified immediately. If necessary, the child will be transferred to a local hospital (we will send your child to a parent specified hospital only if you had specified on the emergency card), by the local emergency responders, for treatment at the parent's expense. Parents are responsible for the child's health insurance/accident coverage.

The staff is required, by Minnesota State Law, to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to authorities.

Toilet Trained Policy

All children entering Stepping Stones, School Readiness, and Discovery must be fully toilet trained.

Children must be able to use the toilet and clean themselves independently. This includes being able to communicate with staff their need to go, dressing and undressing themselves and physically using the toilet. Children should not be wearing diapers or pull-ups, as we do not have adequate facilities or training for changing diapers. Please notify the School Readiness Coordinator regarding any concerns in this area. Recurring bathroom accidents will require a parent meeting with the School Readiness Coordinator and Community Education Director.

Recurring bathroom accidents is defined as a child soiling their pants once per day over the course of a 2-3 day period.

Medications

- Under NO circumstances shall School Readiness staff give prescription medications or over-the-counter medicines without a physician's instruction and signed parent permission.
- All medications will be distributed by the staff during school days. Children may not take medication on their own.
- For long-term medications (prescribed for more than two weeks), a written statement from the family physician indicating the need for such medication to be administered during preschool hours is required to be on file.
- The medication will be stored in a safe and appropriate place, with access restricted to our preschool staff only.
- NO medication should be sent with the child - parents must deliver it personally. The medication must be in the original bottle and properly labeled. The medication cannot be labeled in containers such as plastic bags or envelopes.
- EPI-Pens must be dropped off by parents the first week of school.

Food Allergies

If your child has any food allergies, it is VERY IMPORTANT that you indicate these allergies on the Esko Early Learning Student Health Summary page of the enrollment paperwork.

Please be specific about possible reactions.

Snack

We ask that you send your child, each day, with a healthy snack (veggies, fruit cups/applesauce, crackers, etc) and a water bottle. Please try your best to avoid sugary snacks. We only allow the children to have one snack for snack time. Please make sure to only send one item along with them. When more are sent along, they have to choose, and that makes for unhappy children - as they may want both items.

We do not allow any snacks which include any peanuts or tree nuts. Please read the ingredients on your child's snack before sending them along with your child. **Our classrooms are Peanut and Tree Nut Free.** Please help us to keep this policy and provide a safe space for all of our children.

Birthday Policies

- We do not allow birthday treats in class. Please refrain from sending treats.
 - We have a few ways in which we acknowledge each individual child's birthday during class. Summer birthdays will be acknowledged near the end of the school year.
- We only allow handing out birthday invitations in class if you plan to invite the entire class. If you are inviting only a few we ask that you make alternate arrangements to get invitations to those children. Thank you for your help with this!

Clothing/Belonging Policy

Children should be adequately dressed each day for indoor and outdoor activities. Please make every effort to dress students for each day's weather. Also, keep in mind that if there should be a case of an emergency (fire, evacuation, etc.) where we need to leave the building immediately, we do not stop to put on coats/sweaters/sweatshirts. Whatever your child has on is what they will be walking outdoors with should an emergency arise.

Outerwear should be labeled with the child's name on each individual item. The Esko Preschool program is not responsible for any lost or stolen articles.

Please provide an extra set of clothing to keep at school in a gallon sized Ziplock bag with their name clearly written on it. We will store these bags of clothing at school for the year. This clothing will need to be replaced if we end up using it as a change of clothes for your child during a particular school day. The intent of having this change of clothing is as a backup plan. (For example: a toilet accident, spilling something on themselves, or playing outdoors and accidentally slipping on mud or sliding into a puddle) If soiled clothing is ever sent home with your child you should send a new set along with your child for the next class date in a clean labeled bag.

Please do not allow your child to bring toys or games along - unless it is for their personal show & tell day. These extra items can be distracting to the classroom, and they also run the risk of breaking or being misplaced.

Remember to send extra shoes along during boot season. You may leave a pair of shoes at the school during the boot season so that you don't have to keep sending them daily. Each class has a shoe bin to store extra shoes. These shoes must be labeled with children's names on each shoe.

Teaching Responsibility

Our School Readiness and Discovery classes (4-5 year olds) will be teaching the children personal responsibilities. They will need to be able to unload and load their own items into their backpacks, zip their bags up, and put on their own outerwear as needed. Please keep this in mind as you prepare your child for school throughout the year. Practice at home will make this learning process run far more smoothly. Also, please keep this in mind when picking out the size of their backpack, and when allowing students to bring items from home. We realize that many of our students also attend Cool Kids and have some items they need for that time of day (lunch, blanket, etc). We just want you to start thinking about how your child is going to handle all of the items independently and help to set them up for success.

Our Stepping Stones class (3-4 year olds) will get a bit more support with this learning experience, but as the year progresses they will also be expected to handle these tasks independently. Please begin practicing these skills at home. Although it seems easier to help children when learning how to put on coats and boots, in the long run, they need to be able to handle these tasks themselves. It is definitely a step-by-step developmental process. They will need your modeling and support.

Staff

Our preschool staff consist of a licensed Teacher, a Program Assistant, and an Early Childhood Special Education Paraprofessional in each of the classes.

Esko Preschool staff appreciate parental input. Please communicate with the staff about daily concerns, family illnesses, or anything that might affect your child's day.

Parent/Teacher conferences will be held at teachers' discretion. We would prefer to keep the lines of communication open all year long. Please feel comfortable to connect with the teacher as needed as well. Email is the best way to connect with our classroom teachers. If there is an immediate need to connect you can always call the classroom number as well.

We encourage parents to share any special skills, activities, or their profession with the class. We want to introduce the children to new experiences, and including family members is a great way to make connections and provide additional knowledge from a variety of areas. Any scheduled visitors will be welcomed and appreciated!

We welcome any suggestions you may have regarding our programming. If you have any questions or concerns, at any point, please call our Community Education office at 879-4038

The staff is required, by Minnesota State Law, to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to authorities.

Non-payment

If your payments are not made within the 30 day grace period you will be charged a \$50.00 late fee. If your payments are not made and you go over 60 days, you will automatically be sent to collections and your preschool programing will be discontinued. If you are sent to collections you will be charged an extra 20% to your bill for collection fees.

Please contact the Esko Community Education Office with any questions regarding your payment.