

NORTH MAHASKA PRESCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK
2021-2022



We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because
we stop playing. George Bernard Shaw

North Mahaska Preschool

“building the foundation for excellence in education”

Our Philosophy

The early childhood preschool program is designed to implement a researched-based curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and promotes positive outcomes for all young children. The program is consistent with goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following domain areas, while responding to the needs of families: social/emotional development, cognitive development, physical development, and language development. Through a carefully planned environment including responsive, nurturing adults and peers, children develop the knowledge, skills, disposition and feelings that are linked with successful learning.

Multiple instructional approaches are utilized to optimize children's opportunities for learning. These approaches include strategies that range from structured to unstructured and adult-directed to child-directed. Children construct understandings through active interactions within the age-appropriate environment with adults, peers, materials, and events. We recognize that learning is an interactive process and respond to the diversity of learners by helping children to understand, respect, and appreciate individual differences.

The program is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on children's learning and development. These assessments occur within the context of communicating with families and with sensitivity to the culture contexts in which children grow and develop. Assessment results are used to benefit children by informing sound decisions about children, teaching, and program improvement.

Rationale

We recognize there has been a trend toward emphasis on formal instruction in academic skill areas in early childhood education programs. Children are capable of learning more complex language, concepts, and skills than has been previously taught. We know that early intervention is a key to successful learning. We believe that all children benefit from a developmentally appropriate preschool program facilitated by certified effective teachers. We want to identify all

children who are in need and provide the opportunity for their placement in a quality program.

Our Curriculum

Well planned, evidence-based curriculum, implemented by qualified teachers who promote learning in appropriate ways, can contribute significantly to positive outcomes for all children. Both federal and state expectations emphasize the need for scientifically based research to guide curriculum adoption and evaluations of curriculum effectiveness. Therefore, the preschool program sponsored by North Mahaska Community School District is designed to meet the needs of the children and offer a curriculum that is evidence based and of high quality. North Mahaska Preschool curriculum follows the standards and assessments set forth by the Creative Curriculum series. North Mahaska Preschool curriculum also follows the guidelines of the Iowa Early Learning Standards.

Mission Statement

To provide high-quality and age-appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment, which emphasize direct interaction with materials, with adults, and with other children.

To emphasize early childhood literacy, cognitive development, physical skills, and social-emotional development.

To involve children in setting meaningful and accessible learning goals, selecting and managing their learning, and in assessing their learning.

To employ a wide variety of instructional approaches to assure that the learning levels and individual styles of children are accommodated.

To maintain class sizes at the primary level to twenty or below.

To increase parent involvement in our school and parent knowledge of age-appropriate learning.

Assessment

The teachers assess children on an on-going basis. Some of the instruments they use are: *Creative Curriculum On-Line GOLD Assessment*, *Individual Growth & Development Indicators (IGDIs)* - school readiness screening tools for literacy

and numeracy, Handwriting Without Tears, Foundations - comprehensive reading, spelling, and handwriting program, teacher-made preschool checklists, observations, and student portfolios. Child progress is provided to parents during parent-teacher conferences in accordance with North Mahaska's conference schedule. Parents are welcome to request updates or conferences with their child's teacher at any time.

Communication

On-going two way communication between the preschool teacher and parents is an important part of preschool and one of the many ways we ensure success for your child. Here are some ways you can expect to communicate this year:

- Annual Home Visits
- Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Spring Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Program Surveys
- Parent / Student Questionnaires
- Phone calls
- Weekly Newsletters
- Annual Family Fun Night

We encourage you to reach out anytime you have any questions, concerns, or things to share about your child. Your child's teacher will be communicating with you throughout the year in efforts to:

- Provide opportunities for two-way communication about your child
- Share assessment results
- Provide information for academic support at home
- Obtain feedback in efforts to meet your child's needs at preschool

Enrollment Policies

Each child must be 4-years-old on or by September 15 of the current school year. The following forms need to be completed and returned to North Mahaska Elementary School in order to enroll a child into the Preschool Program:

- 1) Health Form (physical)
- 2) Immunization Record - must be signed by a doctor or public health official. State Law requires that students must be properly immunized before entering preschool. Only students who are medically exempt or have religious exemption will be allowed to enter school without required

immunizations. Parents will be required to provide documentation for exemption prior to child starting school.

- 3) Information Sheet/Parental Emergency Medical Consent and Release Forms
Information on these forms will be on file to use in the event that your child becomes ill or is injured at school. It is very important that CURRENT emergency contact numbers are on file. It is the parent's responsibility to notify staff if information for the child changes. In the event your child is injured or seriously ill, this form gives the hospital the authority to treat your child, under emergency circumstances without a parent being present to admit him/her. This authority will remain in effect until revoking in writing.
- 4) North Mahaska School Enrollment Form - online: open later this summer.
- 5) Food/Medical Allergy Form (if applicable).
- 6) Copy of your child's original birth certificate.

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is encouraged for each child. If your child is going to be absent from school, please call the preschool teacher or the elementary office as soon as possible. Absences and tardies are recorded each day. Also, if your child rides the bus and will be absent, please call the elementary office so that arrangements can be made to notify the bus driver.

Fee Policy and Financial Agreements

There is no fee charged to attend North Mahaska Preschool Program. There is NO open-enrollment policy for preschool-age students. Students from any district may attend.

Transportation

Preschool students who attend the morning class can be picked up at their house on a regular bus route. Students in the morning class can be transported home by a school bus or school vehicle at the conclusion of class.

Preschool students who attend the afternoon class can be picked up at their house by a school bus or a school vehicle. Students in the afternoon class can be transported home on the regular bus route at the conclusion of class.

Preschool students that do not reside in the North Mahaska School District will need to provide transportation to current North Mahaska School District pick-up/drop off sites. Transportation to those sites is the responsibility of the parent.

Schedule

Preschool classes will meet every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8:15-11:20 AM or Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 12:15-3:20 PM. The number of students enrolled will determine the number of class sessions.

Holidays and Spring Break vacation days will follow the same schedule as the North Mahaska School District. Adjustments made to the preschool class schedule will be made for teacher in-service days and early outs by the North Mahaska Elementary Principal. Parents will be notified in advance of any changes in the schedule.

When school weather conditions or other emergencies make it necessary to close school, we will follow the pattern of the North Mahaska School District.

Arrival and Dismissal Time

Preschool begins at approx. 8:15 AM for the morning class session and ends at 11:20 AM. Preschool begins at 12:15 PM and ends at 3:20 PM for the afternoon class session. Students not coming on buses may arrive 5-10 minutes before their scheduled class time. It is required that any adult bringing your child to school, come completely into the building unless there is a preschool staff waiting at the door.

***AM class** - No child will be allowed to exit the preschool without an adult. Adults must accompany children while in the parking lot.

***PM class** - Please see the attached new pick up procedures for the school.

Field Trips

On occasion, the preschool classes will attend field trips in or out of town to support the curriculum. North Mahaska School transportation will be used to transport students to and from field trips. Parents are encouraged to attend field trips. Any volunteer attending field trips with the preschool will need to complete a NM Parent/Adult Volunteer form and return it to the preschool or elementary school office prior to volunteering.

Health Policy

A child with a rash, fever, sore throat, or severe cold should stay at home for the benefit of himself/herself and the other children and adults. Do not send your child to class if they are suffering from any contagious condition. Children need to be free of fever, without the use of medication, for 24 hours before

returning to preschool. If your child becomes ill while at preschool, you will be called to come and pick up your child by the NM school nurse.

It is a preschool policy that any adult volunteering in the preschool, follow proper handwashing procedures upon entering the room.

Administration of Medication

Students who need to have medication administered during preschool hours must follow the NM's district's medication policy.

Prescription medication shall be administered when the student's parent or guardian **and** the doctor provides a signed and dated written statement requisition for medication administration.

Non-prescription medication shall be administered when the student's parent or guardian provides a signed and dated written statement requesting medication administration.

All medication must be in their current original labeled container. All medications will be stored in the office in a secured area. A medication administration log will be maintained.

Cleaning and Sanitation

The cleaning and sanitation of working/eating surfaces, and toys will take place on a regular basis by the preschool staff and more often as needed. An appropriately mixed solution of bleach and water is used to sanitize the items. Table tops are cleaned prior to any activity involving food items. Gloves will be worn by staff preparing all snack foods.

A NM custodian sanitizes doorknobs, sinks, toilets, and water fountains on a regular basis to prevent the spread of germs.

Dress Code

Please provide your child with appropriate attire for the weather. Preschool students play outside, daily, all year long (weather permitting). The preschool will follow North Mahaska's dress code. Please remember that racing type shirts often have tobacco and/or alcohol products on them.

Please provide an extra change of clothes, in a gallon-size Ziploc bag, to keep in your child's backpack. If any type of accident occurs, the staff will assist your child in changing into the clothes provided by them, as needed.

Visitors and Volunteers

Parents are encouraged to visit their child's classroom during the school year. Please call the preschool teacher or elementary school office prior to coming so your child's teacher can share with you the activities you will be observing.

Volunteers are also welcome at preschool. The preschool teachers have a number of ways that they can use parent or volunteer talents. Please visit with the classroom teacher and share how you might like to be involved.

Community members, grandparents, high school students, and others, are welcome to volunteer in our preschool classroom throughout the year. All volunteers are required to 1st sign in at preschool or the elementary school office.

Snacks

Preschool snacks will be provided by the NM school food program. Healthy snacks will be provided and come from the following food groups:

- 1) Fruits and Vegetables - fresh when possible, applesauce & mixed fruit cups
- 2) Breads, Cereals & Grains - muffins, crackers, granola/Nutri-grain bars, Poptarts, Rice Krispie Treats
- 3) Milk - 2% white and chocolate milk, yogurt, cheese
- 4) Protein - meat sticks

Birthday treats may be brought from home for your child's birthday. For safety reasons, North Mahaska Schools have a Snack Policy in place. We are required to follow the policy below. Please make sure your child's birthday snack adheres to the school policy. Please let your child's teacher know ahead of time when you would like to send a birthday snack.

North Mahaska School Snack Policy

In order to protect our students with allergies and food intolerances, treats brought for snack time celebrations must be unopened, commercially prepared food with an intact ingredient label or fresh fruit and vegetables. Items not meeting these requirements will not be used and will be returned home. No homemade treats will be accepted.

Grievance Policy

Any questions or concerns regarding the preschool program should be first discussed with your child's teacher. If further communication is needed the elementary principal may be contacted. Any grievances, differences, or disagreements with the preschool program or the teacher will fall under the jurisdiction of the North Mahaska Community School District School Board Policy.

A NO SMOKING LAW is in effect at the preschool, in the parking area, in the outdoor play area, or anywhere on the school grounds. All citizens are required to follow the NO SMOKING LAW. This also includes all preschool functions, i.e. programs, open house, or any type of field trip.

***Handbook updated September 2021**