

Ventnor City Public Schools Preschool Handbook



WELCOME

Welcome to the Ventnor City Public School preschool program! We are excited to welcome you and your child(ren) to the Ventnor School family.

This handbook explains policies, procedures, and expectations for families participating in our preschool program.

Please be sure to join your child's class dojo, sign up to be a classroom volunteer and participate in Early Childhood Advisory Council meetings.

Wishing you and your family a joyful school year filled with learning and growing!



SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Hours:

The preschool drop-off begins at 8:15 a.m. and pick-up ends at 3:15 p.m.

Early dismissal for students begins at 12:05 and concludes at 12:15 pm.

Inclement Weather:

When inclement weather causes the closing of school for the entire day, or a delayed opening, parents will receive a phone call and an email announcement through the school messenger system. Updates will also be posted on the school's website, Class Dojo and the district's social media.

Transportation:

All students who are eligible for transportation will receive information about your child's bus and route directly from the district's transportation office. Questions regarding transportation should be directed to the Transportation Office, 609-487-7900 extension 5200 or emailed to dscarlett@veccnj.org.

Bus Procedures

To provide safe and efficient transportation for transportation eligible students, the following procedures must be followed:

- Students are to be ready and wait with a parent/guardian when the bus arrives.
- Parents/guardians/caretakers will not be permitted on the school bus at any time.
- To ensure the safety of your children, individual transportation schedules cannot be honored. The pick-up and drop-off address for a student must be the same every day.
- Any child being picked up early must bring a note to the teacher/contact the office each time this occurs. Please do not message the teacher at dismissal as they may not see the message in time. Please call the office with any last-minute changes.
- Any changes in the child's established schedule will require written notification to the teacher.
- If a child is picked up by any person other than the established parent/guardian/caretaker, a note from the parent must be sent. The person picking up will be required to show identification.
- Someone (18 years or older) must be at the bus stop to receive the child after school. If no one is at the stop, the child will be returned to the school. The child's caregiver will be responsible for coming to the school to pick the child up.

Arrival/Dismissal

Students are expected to arrive on time each day. Students who arrive after 8:30am must come through security at the front of the building. Pick-up begins at 3:05 pm. All students must be picked up by 3:15pm.

Visiting the School

Please have your identification with you any time you plan to enter the school building.

Release of Children

Parent/Guardian must provide a list of people authorized to pick up their child. If a non-custodial parent has been denied access or granted limited access to a child by a court order, the school shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

Absentee Policy

All families are to notify the school office (609-487-7900 ext. 5000) if a child will not be in school. Responsibility for having children attend school solely rests with the parent/guardian. It is important for a student to attend school each day to benefit most from our program. Consistent attendance sets students up for success as they begin their academic journey.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Student Health

Students are required to submit an up-to-date immunization record and Universal Health Form completed by your child's pediatrician. State requirements dictate that your child receive a seasonal influenza vaccine. All influenza vaccine immunization documentation should be received by December 31 and submitted to the school's health office. Failure to provide documentation of your child's influenza vaccine will result in your child's exclusion from the preschool program after winter break.

Please use the following guidelines to assist in determining if your child should go to school:

- Students must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicine before returning to school after an illness.
- Students must have no episodes of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school after being ill.

All preschool students will be screened annually for vision, hearing, dental, height, and weight.

Medication may be provided to your child while at school in accordance with our policies, as well as state regulations. **ONLY MEDICATIONS AUTHORIZED BY A PHYSICIAN WILL BE GIVEN TO A CHILD IN SCHOOL.** Any medication brought for your child must be personally handed to the school nurse, not left in a child's bag. Medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's first and last name, labeled with date, and a completed prescription form from the doctor that includes directions and dosage information. If your child requires medication during the school day, please contact the health office for more information (609-487-7900 ext. 5090 Or 5310)

Safety Drills

To keep our students safe, and in accordance with NJ law, schools are required to hold a minimum of two drills a month; one fire drill and one security drill. These drills are conducted with support from local emergency responders. All drills are introduced in developmentally appropriate ways and notifications are sent to families when there is a security drill.

PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS

Configurations

All classrooms are mixed-aged (3- and 4-year-olds) instructional groupings. Each classroom also includes students with an individualized education plan. The Speech Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and Physical Therapist provide services to the students who meet eligibility criteria through the child study team within our classrooms. The district has 6 classrooms. Each classroom has a maximum of 15 students, one certified teacher and a full-time paraprofessional. Our program uses the state approved Creative Curriculum with Second Step program for social and emotional learning. Each lesson in the curriculum offers opportunities for teachers to meet each child at their individualized developmental level, for each specific skill and objective. There are multiple options to differentiate instruction for students, regardless of age.

Communication Methods

Our preschool program uses Class Dojo for communicating with families. In addition, families will have access to the Teaching Strategies Family App. Please note that classroom teachers access the Class Dojo during the teacher planning period (1230-130). Please contact the school office with any important information to ensure that the message is received. Our weekly newsletter will consist of curriculum and classroom information, including suggestions for at home learning and will be posted in the Family App.

Toileting

If your child does not use the toilet independently, please notify your teacher. If your child is wearing pull-ups or diapers, please send in a package, labeled with your child's name. Please send additional toileting items labeled with your child's name, such as wipes.

Change of Clothing

All children should have a full change of clothing in the event of a spill or accident. Please send your child to school with a complete change of clothing that includes undergarments, clothing items, and socks. Please have these items labeled with your child's name in a Ziplock bag. These will be swapped out seasonally.

Bookbags

During the school year, your child will be bringing home projects, notices and papers. They will need a **standard-sized** book bag or backpack to handle all of their belongings. Please label your child's backpack. Please be sure to check your child's backpack each night for notes, newsletters, permission slips and other written communication.

Breakfast

All students are offered breakfast daily as part of the preschool program. If your child chooses to eat breakfast here at school, please note that any portion of the food not eaten will be sent home. This will ensure that the district complies with the regulations set forth by the state for what must be included in a meal.

Lunch

Students will be eating lunch in the classroom each day. Students may bring lunch from home or eat the food provided by the cafeteria (free, reduced, or paid lunch). Menus will be sent home from your child's school. The application for Free and Reduced lunch is available on the district's website. Please contact the Elementary School Office with any questions regarding the application.

Rest Time

Each full day of school there will be a rest period after lunch for approximately one hour. Students are not required to sleep but must rest for the period. A cot will be provided for your child. Your child will need a crib sheet and a small blanket/nap mat. Please use the bag provided with your child's name. All bedding must fit in a small space in the classrooms, so please be mindful of the size of items. Bedding will be sent home at the end of each week to be washed. Return the items to school on the following Monday.

Outdoor Time

All preschool classes go outside daily. Please plan accordingly and be sure your child is dressed for the weather with coats, hats and gloves as needed. Families are encouraged to have their children wear protective footwear, such as sneakers, each day to prevent injury during outdoor play.

Labeling

It is extremely important that you label all your child's belongings with first and last names. Sometimes children do not recognize their own items, which can make it challenging to determine which items belong to each child. Please label all items before sending them into school with a permanent marker, label, or sewn in label.

Toys

Toys from home should NEVER be sent to school unless requested by your child's teacher for a special event. Your child may bring one small stuffed animal or doll for rest time; however, please do not send any treasured items. We have plenty of toys at school to share with your child.

Holiday Celebrations

In consideration of the families and children in the program as well as the religious, cultural, and historical significance of holidays- the preschool will not participate in "Holiday Parties". We will move Study celebrations and/or Wow experiences connected to the current study to coincide with dates before breaks. These celebrations will be funded through the preschool grant and will not ask for donations from families. Students will have multiple opportunities to share their culture throughout the year with their classmates.

Volunteers

Classroom Volunteer

To be a classroom volunteer, you must be board approved. If you are interested in becoming a classroom volunteer (this includes joining on the class trip), please send a note to the classroom teacher who will submit your name to the office who will then provide the steps for becoming board approved. Classroom volunteers are used as mystery readers, lunchtime parent, volunteers at study celebrations and wow experiences.

Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)

The ECAC meets several times throughout the school year to provide information to parents specific to preschool to grade 3. Meeting information will be sent via school messenger, class dojo and/or flyers sent home.

Preschool Teaching and Learning

The Creative Curriculum Overview

The Creative Curriculum is a state approved, researched-based program. The curriculum is developmentally appropriate and provides learning experiences for all content areas and all developmental domains. Each day, children will follow a schedule that consists of a morning meeting, small group instruction in literacy and math, choice time for intentional play experiences, large group time, gross motor time, snack, lunch, rest, shared reading, and shared writing.

Studies

The Creative Curriculum consists of hands-on, project-based studies/investigations of topics that are relevant to children's everyday experiences. Studies are exciting and engaging because they tap into children's natural curiosity, creating a learning environment that is fun and intentional. The study approach is a method of integrating content learning through children's in-depth investigations. Children raise questions about the topic, and through exploration and discovery, they find answers to their questions. This allows for deep, firsthand exploration of the topic. The study approach encourages children to develop skills across all domains as they apply the investigative process to their learning.

Wow Experiences

The Creative Curriculum includes experiences or "Wow" moments, in which students are exposed to people and places related to the topic of study. These experiences help students relate what they are learning in school to the real world.

Study Celebrations

At the end of each study, students will celebrate their learning with a special activity. Board approved parent volunteers may be invited to these celebrations. Please be on the lookout for information regarding our study celebrations. Please note that our celebrations are funded through the preschool program and will not ask for donations. Please understand that this is to comply with preschool regulations, ensure dietary restrictions of students and to ensure equitable access.

CREATIVE CURRICULUM

The Creative Curriculum teaches and assesses 38 researched based objectives. These objectives for development and learning define the path teachers take with children in their classroom. These objectives cover 10 different areas of development and learning within broad developmental areas, content areas, and English language acquisition. Using these objectives, teachers effectively scaffold learning experiences to respond to each child's individual current strengths and needs.

Teaching Strategies Gold Overview

The Creative Curriculum is assessed using Teaching Strategies GOLD. The formative assessment model used in GOLD is based on classroom observations, checklists, photographs, work samples, and family input as related to the 38 researched-based objectives for development and learning. GOLD follows widely held expectations for children from birth through third grade, which allows room for differentiation for each child, for each skill. GOLD takes a whole-child approach to assessment. The objectives have color-coded progressions which guide teachers toward selecting and adapting activities that support each child's development and learning. Meaningful reports inform classroom practices.

Progress Reports/Conferences

Preschool Report Cards are sent home three times per year and are based on your child's progress in each of the objectives. Conferences are held once per year, in November. At this time, the classroom teacher will review the Development and Learning Report.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING TOOL AND PROTOCOL

All students in the preschool program will be screened in November. Notification will be sent to parents about when the children will be screened and the results of the screening. If your child scores in the "refer" or "rescreen" range, we will provide additional support and information.

PROJECT CHILD FIND

To identify a preschool age child with a potentially disabling condition, contact the district's Child Study Team at 609-487-7900 ext. 5030.

PRESCHOOL INTERVENTION AND REFERRAL TEAM

The Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) operates to promote the implementation of the Teaching Pyramid to meet program goals for all of our students. The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) developed The Pyramid Model, which is widely used across states including New Jersey. The Center promotes Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) as a problem-based model to prevent and reduce inappropriate behaviors through teaching and reinforcing positive social and emotional behavior. Our program staff has access to resources for Scripted Stories, lesson plans for varied children's books, and strategies to teach and integrate social and emotional skills.

Preschool Contact Information & Role Descriptions

- Preschool Community and Parent Involvement Specialist (CPIS), **Ms. Odalis DeLaTorre**: The CPIS works directly with parents to ensure access to community resources and parent support. There are many opportunities to become involved in your child's education both at home and in school.
- Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist (PIRS), **Mrs. Jenna DiMauro**: The PIRS makes recommendations about appropriate strategies, classroom modifications, and the selection of adaptive materials to address the needs of children with challenging behaviors or potential learning difficulties.
- Preschool Intervention and Referral (PIRT): The Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) assists teachers and families in creating and implementing strategies to help students succeed academically and socially in their classroom environment.
- Child Study Team (CST): The Child Study Team performs tests, determines eligibility, and creates individual education plans (IEP's) for students found eligible for special education services. Please contact the Child Study Team office at 609-487-7900 ext. 5030 if you have concerns related to your child's development and/or to identify your child for eligibility for services. This includes our Social Worker, **Mrs. Francine Kurz**.
- Preschool Instructional Coach (PIC), **Mrs. Jane Garbutt**: The preschool instructional coach is available to provide support and assistance regarding program quality and curriculum implementation for staff, students, and families.
- Supervisor of Special Education and Preschool, **Ms. Alison Richman**

Additional information regarding the New Jersey Preschool Expansion, including Preschool standards and implementation guidelines, can be found on the Department of Education, Office of Preschool's website: <https://nj.gov/education/earlychildhood/preschool/>

