

Lake George Charter School *Preschool Program* *Handbook*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PRESCHOOL?

Early Childhood Education or preschool provides children ages 3-5 years with the opportunity to be introduced to group environments where they can grow in their social and emotional development. This introduction to developmentally appropriate learning assists the young child in becoming school-ready. In 2017, the American Educational Research Association showed the lasting effects of a quality preschool program; an 11.4% increase in high school graduates.

Mission Statement

Lake George Charter School provides an environment where students safely grow and enjoy learning.

At Lake George Charter School - Preschool Program our goal is to provide each child with an environment that promotes the individual child to dream, explore, discover, learn, grow and be creative. To do this, we strive to provide a learning space that is safe and peaceful. Our goal is to create students who are part of a community and make an impact on the world around them all while having fun!

WHAT WILL MY CHILD LEARN?

Our program uses *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* from Teaching Strategies. This is an evidence-based curriculum designed to teach to the whole child. The curriculum is broken down into interest-based studies that last approximately 6-8 weeks. Each study incorporates social-emotional and physical development, language, literacy and mathematics, as well as, science, social studies and the arts.

While the curriculum focuses on making sure that students are presented with multiple opportunities to master academics; many of the most important learning opportunities for children are through play. *The Creative Curriculum* strategically utilizes children's free choice in play to build upon their skills and continue in their development.



HOW IS MY CHILD KEPT HEALTHY?

All preschoolers are required by law to have an annual physical exam and current Certificate of Immunization or approved alternate Certificate of Immunization. *Not all children in our program are immunized.* Physicals can be obtained at local health clinics or from a physician.

The school provides vision and hearing screenings annually. Results are shared with families. We encourage dental screenings for all children. Resource lists for health care are available. The school nurse checks all forms and will contact you if it is determined that hearing, vision or dental screenings beyond what we provide, is recommended.

LGCS Preschool program complies with all Colorado State Health practices and procedures. Classroom tables are washed clean and then sanitized before and after each use by children. All classroom materials are disinfected daily. Floors are mopped and vacuumed daily. Deep cleaning and sanitizing occur weekly.

Children are supervised while using the toilet at all times by preschool staff. While independence is encouraged, staff are ready and available to assist children with their toileting needs. Any bathroom assistance will be handled with respect and dignity to the child. Diaper changing is facilitated in its own area of the bathroom with supplies. ALL children will wash their hands following toileting. Staff use gloves and hand washing to prevent contamination. ALL students are expected to have a complete change of clothes (shirt, underwear/diaper, pants and socks) at school in case of emergencies.

Each student will have their own designated space to hang their coats and backpacks. Toys, money and other personal items from home are not allowed at preschool; with the exception of a small stuffed animal to assist your child with the transition from home to school, as needed. Toy weapons of any kind are not permitted at school.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY CHILD IS SICK?

While we strongly encourage that your child have good attendance in order to gain the most from their preschool experience, children can only benefit when they are feeling well and in good health. If your child is running a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, is vomiting or has diarrhea; they must be without symptoms AND without the use of medication for 24 hours before returning to class. Should your child be out sick for 3 or more school days, a doctor's note may be required to allow them to return to class. If your child is going to miss school for any reason, you must notify the classroom of their absence as soon as possible.



DOES MY CHILD NEED A SNACK?

The preschool teaching team will provide snack daily for your child during class. The menu of what is being served for snack will be posted on the family information board outside of the classroom. If your child has an allergy to specific foods, you must complete an allergy form prior to your child starting class. It is important to note that snack is simply that, a snack. Be sure that your child has had a complete meal prior to coming to class. LGCS serves breakfast and lunch for a nominal fee to all students. An adult family member will need to remain with the child while they are eating their meal; preschool staff will be preparing the classroom during this time.

HOW DO YOU KEEP MY CHILD SAFE?

Safety is the highest priority for the teaching team at Lake George Charter School Preschool program. The teaching team are certified in CPR and First Aid. All staff go through extensive background checks with the CBI, FBI and with DHS regarding abuse and neglect. All LGCS staff are mandated reporters with the state of Colorado.

- ❖ We practice what we teach! Safety is at the root of our classroom culture. We keep ourselves safe, we keep each other safe and we keep our things safe!

- ❖ Preschool teachers will be instructing students in proper toileting and hand washing throughout the day. Education regarding germs and staying healthy are essential elements in a classroom.
- ❖ Safety also extends to how we treat others and our things. Throughout each moment of our time in class, teachers are assisting students in problem solving social/emotional challenges and learning how to care for themselves and others.
- ❖ Each preschool class will practice safety drills each month. This includes fire evacuation, tornado and intruder drills. A fire exit procedure map is posted in a clearly visible location. In the event that a fire danger exists near the closest door, staff and students will exit through an alternate door.

Lockdown/Lock Out procedures are in accordance with Park County School District RE-2, the Standard Response Protocol system. In the rare event of an evacuation, preschool staff will have an emergency bag which contains rosters of all children and their approved emergency contacts. There is no designated location for re-unification, as that decision will be made by the incident commander of the particular situation. The preschool will work cooperatively with all authorities to ensure

an orderly and safe reunification process.

Preschool teachers and assistants will ensure that children with special needs are safely evacuated based upon their individual needs.

- ❖ During any transition of activity, especially in regards to leaving the classroom and entering the classroom; attendance is taken using the face-to-name technique.
- ❖ Students will ONLY be released to adults who are listed on the authorized pick up/release form. Adults should be prepared to present identification when picking up a student.
- ❖ Make sure that your child is dressed appropriately to play both inside and outside. This means closed toed shoes, no dress shoes or sandals please. Children should have a light jacket or coat with them every day.
- ❖ Please be aware that ALL health, safety and nutrition practices and policies are determined and governed by the Colorado Department of Human Services AND the Colorado Department of Health. If at any time, LGCS Preschool receives new or alternate practices then what is listed in the preschool handbook; we are required by law to follow those guidelines.



DOES MY CHILD NEED TO BE TOILET TRAINED?

Toilet training is a big developmental milestone for young children. Every child develops and grows at their own pace and this is true with mastering personal hygiene skills. At Lake George Charter School Preschool we view toilet training as a partnership between school and home. Children entering into the program should be comfortable using a toilet independently with minimal assistance. We understand that accidents happen and that children may need assistance with clothing and cleaning themselves. Emergency pull ups and wipes are available for such times. All families should provide the classroom with a complete change of clothes for their child. Preschool staff monitor children during bathroom use and offer help to children as needed. All standard precautions are used by preschool staff when assisting children with toileting. Following use of the bathroom, children are supervised by preschool staff while washing their hands.

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning.

*But for children,
play IS serious learning."*

Mr. Rogers

WHAT IF MY CHILD HAS A SPECIAL NEED?

Each and every child requires special attention and needs. Our goal at LGCS preschool is to partner with families to identify, plan and meet each child's needs both in and out of school.

- If your child takes medication that may affect them while at school, please bring this to the attention of the preschool teaching team so that we can ensure your child's success.

- Should your family be experiencing some extenuating circumstance that could be affecting your child's behavior, health or general well being; there are many community resources that are available to assist you. Communication with the preschool team can help us to better help your child.
- If your child has a medical condition that requires them to have rescue medication on hand and possibly administered to them at school; we will need to create a medical care plan with your child's physician and have the necessary medication prior to your child being in class. Discuss this with the preschool teaching team so we can support you in establishing medical care for your child. All medications are kept in a lock box, out of the reach of children. **DO NOT** send medication with your child or in their back pack.
- If your child becomes ill and requires medication be administered at school; The preschool program **MUST** have a written care plan from the doctor and the original prescription in its packaging. Please speak with the teaching team for detailed information. Our nurse will need to review the medication, the doctor's orders and prepare a medication administration plan for your child.
- Parents or guardians will be notified of any injuries or accidents that occurred during the preschool session and emergency care will be administered as necessary.
- If you and/or the teaching team have concerns regarding your child's development in any area, there are resources provided through Park County School District to assist your family and your child. These services include but are not limited to screenings, evaluations and therapeutic services to allow your child to have a fair and equal educational opportunity as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act.



WHAT ARE THE LOGISTICS?

Now that you know what to expect for your child at Lake George Charter School Preschool Program let's review some specifics.

➔ Parking, Drop off & Pick up

We ask that you park in a parking spot to walk your child into the main front doors of the school. You will sign in/out at the front office for school security. You will then sign your child in/out within the classroom also. This is required by state law. Additionally, only adults 18 and over who are authorized by the parent/guardian may sign a child in or out of preschool. You can always add or delete authorized persons from the authorized pick up list at any time. See a preschool staff member to do this.

➔ Attendance

Regular attendance for your child is critical. Obviously, if your child is sick we do ask that you use your best judgement when keeping them home. Please call the school office and/or the classroom to report your child's absence. Preschool spaces are limited and should attendance become a problem your child's space may be forfeited.

➔ Being on Time

Our preschool classroom door will open to receive students 5 minutes prior to class beginning and ending. Students are not permitted to enter earlier due to staff preparations. Being on time is a necessity so that every student can take part in the curriculum activities for the day. At 10 minutes after class begins (8:00am/12:30pm) the classroom door will be closed and your child will be marked absent; unless prior notification is provided to preschool staff. Additionally, class time is over at 11:15 and at 4:00pm. We are not a child care facility and do not have staff to remain to care for your child. Children can become very distressed when everyone else has left and they are expecting you. Be aware, that after 10 minutes following the end of class, students not picked up must wait in the office. After 30 minutes, any child still waiting for pick up will necessitate contact with the Department of

Human and Social Services via the Sheriff's Department. If you need to pick up your child early, please let the classroom staff know in advance.

➔ Field Trips & Transportation

Should the preschool plan a field trip for the students, transportation would need to be provided by each individual family. Lake George Charter School preschool program does not provide transportation for children 5 and under. Due to our remote location and the young age of our students, the preschool class remains on the school grounds at all times. From our building, playground and trail; our class is visible to both security and late comers at all times.

➔ Celebrations

We celebrate Halloween, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's day and Birthdays.

During "class" parties, preschool staff will supervise all preschool children in attendance. Families who choose to join in these celebrations are responsible for any siblings.

When we have "class" parties there will be a sign up available should families wish to contribute. Additionally, the children will be given opportunities throughout the year (not just on special occasions) to "cook" or make their own snacks as part of our class study.

A birthday can be very a very special day for your child. You are welcome to send a special snack of mini cupcakes and juice boxes to school on that day or the closest day to it. We can also celebrate summer birthdays in May or August. The birthday child will also have the opportunity to wear the class "It's my birthday" pin and have a special photo taken (sent home of course!). Every student will also be able to choose a book to keep from the Birthday Bin. If your family does not wish

to participate in birthday or other celebrations, please discuss this with the preschool teaching staff so that we can honor your wishes appropriately.

Please be aware, that when bringing in a treat or special snack for the class that 1) There needs to be enough for everyone to be included. 2) Only store bought packaged foods are permitted.

On rare occasions the preschool program may offer a pajama day where the children may watch a cartoon of no longer than 30 minutes. Families will be notified in advance of this special activity.

At the end of each preschool year the program hosts a "Rise Up" ceremony to celebrate the accomplishments of each student's success. This event is a non-classroom day and is hosted in the gym. Families are responsible for their student and siblings during this event. Staff will offer guidance to students during the Rise Up Ceremony but will not be in a supervision role.

Incident Weather

The school administrator will make a decision regarding school closure by 5:30am. In the event of a **2 hour delay** there will be **NO morning preschool**. School closings and delays will be posted on Flashalert.net, TV stations 9 KUSA, 11KKTV and the school website. A posting will also be sent out on Class DoJo. Your family's safety is our top priority; please use your best judgement when incident weather occurs.



WHO CAN BE IN THE CLASSROOM?

Lake George Charter School Preschool program fully supports having community and family volunteers in the classroom. As per, Lake George Charter School policy, all adults (18+) must be fingerprinted and complete an FBI and CBI background check in order to volunteer within school grounds. Youth volunteers are not required to have a background check. All volunteers must be scheduled in advance to work within the classroom and have tasks/expectations assigned to them from the preschool staff. Volunteers are never counted as staff in the child ratio or left alone with any child, at any time.

Additional visitors to the classroom can include additional staff from Lake George Charter School, Park County School District RE-2 or other community organizations. All visitors and volunteers to the classroom must sign in with our peace officer in addition to signing the visitor's log in the classroom.



WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED?

Your child should have a complete change of clothes at school in case of spills or accidents. Additionally, your child should have a backpack that they can carry their work home in at the end of the day. Having a jacket and other outside clothing (as needed) should also come to school daily. Children's personal toys and money should not come to school. In the rare case that your child needs to temporarily bring a lovey with them as they adjust to transitioning to school, please coordinate with the preschool staff.

ADMISSION & REGISTRATION

Our preschool program is open to children ages 3-5 years regardless of ability and level of development. Registration is held in the spring for the next school year and in August for the current year. Children **NEED** to have a Certificate of Immunization or approved alternate; birth certificate and current physical (within the past 365 days).

There are two preschool classroom programs offered at Lake George Charter School. The morning program is for 3 year old students in their first year of preschool. The morning class starts at 8:00 and concludes at 11:20am. In the afternoon, the preschool program is for 4-5 year olds preparing for Kindergarten. The afternoon class starts at 12:30 and ends at 4:00pm.

The preschool follows the Lake George Charter School annual school calendar. (see attached)

Spaces are limited and are secured by a first come, first served basis. Children can also be placed on a waiting list for the next available space. In the event you choose to withdraw from our program, please notify us in writing as soon as possible.

All students/families must complete an in-person orientation with the preschool teacher/director prior to attending class.

TUITION

The full tuition has been spread evenly over 9 months and is NOT based on a specific number of days of service. While we traditionally start school in August, we do not charge tuition for that month. School districts in Colorado are not mandated to provide services except for those with identified delays in development. Tuition is due the first week of each month.

Tuition for our morning 3 year old program is \$170 per month. Tuition for our afternoon 4 year old PreK program is \$225 per month.

WHAT IF I HAVE A CONCERN?

It is our sincerest wish that you and your child have a positive school experience. Should you have any questions, concerns or constructive comments you are encouraged to speak with the director of the program immediately.

Per Lake George Charter School policies, any concerns or complaints must first be directed to the preschool director, then with the administrator, then the school board. If at any time, for any reason you choose to withdraw your child from the preschool program you must provide notice of removal in writing to the director of the preschool program.

Preschool Teacher/Director
Bobette Faux bfaux@lgcsco.org

Lake George Charter School Administrator
Lee Ann Wade drwade@lgcsco.org

The Colorado Department of Human Services licenses the preschool program. The license is posted in the classroom. If you have concerns that your child has been abused while under the care of the preschool staff, you may contact the following numbers. Colorado law also requires preschool staff to report any suspected cases of abuse or neglect.

Park County Department of Human Services
PO Box 968
Fairplay, CO 80440-0968
719-836-4139

To report a licensing complaint:
Department of Human Services
Child-Care Licensing
1575 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80203
800-799-5876
Or 303-866-5948

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD ACTS LIKE A CHILD???

Let's face it....everybody has a bad day once in awhile. Preschool age kids are no different. EXCEPT...everything is brand new to them. They are learning how to use language to convey their needs. They are learning what words to use, when and how. They are learning that there are different rules for different people and different places. AND they are learning how to get along with other people. YIKES! And they aren't even 5 yet!!!! Our strategy is to help each child learn and grow in their social and emotional development through a positive and reassuring approach.

In reality, there is a lot of preparation and intentionality in the preschool classroom regarding behavior management. The key is to create and establish a safe and trusting environment for the children. From there we can begin laying a foundation for them to grow with...where ever they are at.

We begin by teaching them feelings vocabulary and practicing what those feelings may look like on others. By practicing this daily the children can then better identify and label their own feelings and learn how to read social cues in others. Teaching children strategies on how to calm themselves and practicing these skills also gives them the power over their emotions. You'll see that we practice belly breaths, mindfulness techniques, exercise and even taking a quiet break or asking for a hug.

The first thing that needs to happen when a child acts out needs to be to ask the question...why? Are they seeking attention or are they trying to avoid attention? We then try to help them use more acceptable strategies. For example, if a child is seeking negative attention, then ignoring the negative behavior and heaping praise on the positive behavior will help to retrain their approach to gain attention.

Another strategy is focusing in on safety. Our class rules are very simple yet cover everything.

We keep ourselves safe,
We keep each other safe,
We keep our things safe.

By using positive discipline techniques like reframing and redirection, children can learn to make more positive choices. For example, Susie is running in the classroom and steps on John's hand. "Susie, let's look at John. John is crying. He looks sad. His hand hurts. How can we keep ourselves safe and our friends?" We can use our walking feet in class. "Susie, what do you think can make John feel better?"

By using a positive approach and guiding the children during the social encounter, Susie and John are able to learn about problem solving, empathy, building friendships, cause and effect and making better choices.

You'll also notice in the classroom that there is a lot of structure and routine. There are systems in place for everything. We have a schedule that we follow every day. Each child has a job or responsibility each day. There are only so many children allowed in each play area at a time, meaning that they need to take turns or wait their turn. There is a volume monitor that helps us listen to how loud we are getting and to know what noises are ok outside and inside.

But most importantly, there is positive descriptive praise. This goes beyond the typical "Good Job". Positive Descriptive Praise is acknowledging what a person has done in a positive way without attaching your personal approval or disapproval to it. For example, "Johnny, you were a good friend to Robby when you shared your legos with him." or "Mary, I noticed you made a safe choice for our toys when you helped Sarah clean up!"

This positive approach to discipline comes from a combination of evidence proven practices. Attached is a parent guide from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Be sure to check out these websites for more information.

Should specific behaviors become a consistent challenge with a child in the classroom, preschool staff will consult with the child's family and other school personnel (ie. principal, school counselor etc) to determine the next steps. In some cases, this can include establishing a behavior support plan for the child.

Developmental Screening and Monitoring

Lake George Charter School preschool program uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) developmental screening tool as a first step in looking closely at a child's growth, learning and development. Developmental Screening provides valuable insight about a child's cognitive, motor, communication and social-emotional development to determine if children are learning basic skills. Screenings are helpful because they identify children's current understanding of concepts and assist in helping early learning professionals build an educational baseline from which to begin planning. Screening results can help to connect children at risk of developmental delay to community resources and supports for further evaluation or to determine eligibility for services. Screening results will be shared with families and remain confidential. If your child is in need of additional evaluation, we will work with your family to ensure that you are connected to the appropriate resource within the community: based on the age of your child, your child's needs and the county and school district in which your family lives.

Screening will happen annually, during the registration process (unless results indicate a need for more frequent intervals). Screening results will inform our educational planning and will be used to individualize and enhance the learning environment. Family participation and input is a valuable aspect of the developmental screening process and will be an integral part of the process. We look forward to partnering with you in the developmental screening process.

Ongoing developmental monitoring will continue throughout the school year and teaching staff will provide you with progress updates during parent/teacher conferences.



All teaching staff at Lake George Charter School Preschool are mandatory reporters.

A mandatory reporter is defined as a professional who is obligated by law to report known or suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect. Mandatory reporters are part of the safety net that protects children and youth and have the ability to provide lifesaving help to child victims in our community. Any person specified in C.R.S. 19-3-304 is by law a mandatory reporter in Colorado. If a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, the mandatory reporter shall immediately upon receiving such information report or cause a report to be made of such fact to the county department, the local law enforcement agency, or through the child abuse reporting hotline system.

Our goal is never to cause strife for your child or your family. Communication is key when understanding behavioral and physical changes that may occur with small children. Please be sure to communicate when bumps and bruises are present on your child and how they happened. Be sure to let preschool staff know when changes occur in the home that may be impacting your child. There are many resources available both within our school and community to assist both your child and your family in any given set of circumstances.

For more information about mandatory reporters visit: co4kids.org/mandatoryreporting