

Northfield Public Schools Hand In Hand Preschool Handbook



**Northfield Community Education Center
700 Lincoln Parkway, Northfield, MN 55057
507-645-1200**

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Important Phone Numbers

Community Education Center front office	507-645-1200
Nurse's Line	507-645-1205
Attendance line	507-414-8771
Sara Line-Early Childhood Coordinator	507-645-1232
Gabriela Nieves (para Espanol)	507-301-8957
Benjamin Bus	507-645-5720
ECFE (Early Childhood Family Education)	507-664-3649
Martha Donahoe (preschool tuition/ E.C screening)	507-645-1200
Hiawatha Transit	1-866-623-7505
*Messages for staff may be left with the front desk	507- 645-1200

DISTRICT VISION

We prepare every student for lifelong success by developing critical thinkers who are curious and ready to engage in our society.

SAFETY

Your children's safety is our main concern. Please check in with the main office staff if you need to pick up your child early or drop something off for them. Although we can often recognize parents/guardians, by making your presence officially known we can be more fully aware of who is in our building at all times. In addition, each family will receive a packet to fill out including **health/emergency forms** as it is very important we have that on file. Hand in Hand practices regular fire, severe weather, and lock-down drills throughout the year.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to give you specific information regarding Hand in Hand Preschool. We ask that you read through it and keep it in an accessible place where it can be referred to as needed. Please speak with your child's teacher if further information or clarification is needed. The District's full policy regarding guidance and discipline may be found in the [Student Citizen Handbook](#). We believe that open communication between parents/guardians and teachers is an essential part of your child's educational experience. We realize that children between the ages of three and five are continuing to develop their understanding of the world and sometimes their interpretations of phrases, vocabulary, time concepts, and the concepts of real vs. imaginary are not yet mature. Occasionally, misunderstandings may occur. If you wonder about something your child has told you regarding school, please contact us, so that together we can clarify. Please refer to the class note/calendar/Seesaw describing our activities to help generate conversation about your child's day; children will transport papers and messages each week in a backpack/bag your child will bring to and from school each day. In addition, newsletters will be emailed out to families.

HAND IN HAND TEACHERS

Hand in Hand Preschool teachers hold a bachelor's degree in Education and are licensed by the State of Minnesota to teach young children. Many hold a Master's in Education. All staff participate in district training, professional development, as well as contributing to the weekly district-wide Professional learning Communities where we work to improve teaching techniques and student progress.

PHILOSOPHY OF HAND IN HAND PRESCHOOL

The most important goal in our program is to help children become enthusiastic learners. This means encouraging children to be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas and to think their own thoughts. Our goal is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners. The developmentally appropriate activities we plan for the children, the way we organize the room, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with the children are all designed to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give your child a successful start in school.

EXAMPLES OF APPROXIMATE SCHEDULE

HALF DAY

Meet/greet, small motor activities 15 minutes

Circle time: calendar with counting/patterns, weather, music/movement 30 minutes

Flextime: small group skill-building, centers, and choice time 60 minutes

Stories/songs, bathroom break/snacks 30 minutes

Outside/gym large motor time 30 minutes

FULL DAY

Welcome, sign in, free choice time 60 minutes

Snack/Stories 15 minutes

Circle time, stations, literacy 60 minutes

Large motor/outside time 30 minutes

Lunch 30 minutes

Second Step (Social/Emotional) and stories 30 minutes

Rest time/quiet activities 90 minutes

Stories, movement songs 30 minutes

Snack 15 minutes

Outside time 45 minutes

CURRICULUM/ASSESSMENT *Specific Curriculum mapping documents are available upon request

Young children learn best by *doing*, not just repeating what someone else says but actively experimenting to find out how things work in the world we live in. We believe that play provides the foundation for school learning. It is the preparation children need before they learn those highly abstract symbols such as letters (which are symbols for sounds) and numbers. Play enables us to achieve the key goals of our early childhood curriculum; play is the “work” of young children! Teachers use a combination of *Everyday Mathematics*, *Ladders to Literacy*, *Heggerty*, *Handwriting Without Tears*, and *Second Step* to support our curriculum at Hand in Hand Preschool. The Minnesota Department of Education’s Early Childhood Indicators of Progress state standards acts as a framework for our instruction.

At Hand in Hand preschool, we use authentic, observational assessment. The system is not only designed to work with our curriculum, but it is aligned with the Minnesota State standards for early learning, the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress; it helps us get to know what our students know and can do. With this information, we individualize children’s learning, flex group, and offer engaging experiences that help build on their strengths and interests. The system is inclusive of children with disabilities, children who are developing typically, and children who demonstrate competencies beyond typical developmental expectations. It also supports the assessment of children who are English learners.

Social/Emotional: To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, interact with them, and feel they are part of a group. To help children experience pride and self-confidence, be able to express themselves creatively, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.

Cognitive: To help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, asking questions and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings. The environment is rich in language to support early literacy and children are exposed to mathematics and logical thinking as it is embedded in the classroom and routine as well.

Physical: To help children increase their large and small muscle skills, self-help skills, and feel confident about what their bodies can do.

In our younger three-year-old classes the main focus is on socialization and school routines. As educators, we realize the importance of meeting their social needs first, and by using the *Second Step* Social/Emotional curriculum staff is able to do just that before introducing beginning concepts such as colors, shapes, and other pre-academic skills.

In our older Kindergarten Readiness classes, the focus is on preparing for Kindergarten. The students are introduced to basic concepts such as counting, patterns, numbers, colors, and shapes through *Everyday Mathematics*. The students are also introduced to pre-literacy skills such as letters and sounds with *Heggerty*, in addition to building on the *Second Step* social-emotional concepts. Staff uses the *Handwriting Without Tears* curriculum to begin to introduce proper strokes and letter formation (fine motor) skills. The students are also familiarized with school expectations, transitions, and routines. The Kindergarten Readiness class lays the foundation for a great start to the Kindergarten experience.

In order to provide the highest quality early childhood experiences to our families, our co-taught classrooms are capped at 18 students with at least 3 staff in each classroom, and our consult classes (lead by one teacher) are capped at 16 students with at least 2 staff in each class.

PEER INTERACTION/INCLUSION

Classes in the Hand in Hand Preschool are co-taught by a licensed early childhood special education teacher and a licensed early childhood general education teacher. At least one educational assistant is also assigned to each classroom. A unique aspect of the Hand in Hand Preschool is that children with special needs and typically developing children attend, interact and learn together. The staff members model appropriate actions and words to help the children find ways to work together. There are many opportunities for the children to help each other and serve as positive role models. In the process, children learn tolerance and understanding of differences, resulting in a mutually beneficial learning setting.

INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS/ CONFERENCES

Each child must complete **Early Childhood Screening** within the first 90 days of enrollment, which includes vision, hearing, height/weight, a developmental check, and a social/emotional assessment. Our teachers participate in ongoing assessment/progress monitoring techniques. In addition, IEP objectives are developed for all Special Education students. Conferences are offered twice yearly (fall and spring) and provide an opportunity for parents/guardians and teachers to discuss a child's development, strengths, goals, and any concerns. Informal conferences can be arranged by contacting the teacher before or after school and requesting a time to discuss any issues.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Parent/Guardian involvement is an important part of your child's learning experience at Hand in Hand Preschool. Research has shown that children who have involved parents/guardians have more success in school. We offer many opportunities throughout the year for you to become involved in your child's preschool experience. We utilize Seesaw to communicate regularly with parents/guardians, as well as a folder system that travels back and forth each preschool day. You will receive weekly updates as well as monthly newsletters. Please do not hesitate to connect with your child's teacher at any time. We plan regular parent/guardian education events and family activity nights. Early Childhood Family Education and Adult Basic Education also offer many opportunities for parents/guardians to become involved in their children's education through regular classes, one-time events, or parent/guardian coaching/consultation! Please call Early Childhood Family Education at **507-664-3649** or the **Early Childhood Coordinator at 507-645-1232** to request information.

PARENT/GUARDIAN COMPONENT

Parents/Guardians of Hand in Hand students will be asked to participate throughout the year.

Examples of parent/guardian involvement may include:

- Early childhood screening (required for all Hand in Hand students)
- Family Consultation/Coaching
- Attending family meetings, fall and spring conferences
- Attend the Community Education Advisory Council
- Parent/Guardian-Child Activities and Lending Library participation
- Guest speakers-Parent/Guardian education opportunities
- Family Events
- Attending an Early Childhood Family Education class

GUIDANCE

Our policy is to provide positive guidance to help children resolve conflicts. It is our goal to build trusting relationships with and among the children and to teach appropriate behavior. By teaching children effective ways of communicating their needs, children learn independence and responsibility. Children will be encouraged to "use your words" to resolve conflicts. In this way, children learn positive and appropriate skills to express emotions. They also learn valuable social skills such as

negotiation and turn-taking. Any significant behavior issues/inappropriate language use will be addressed together with parents/guardians on an individual basis. Hand in Hand staff will complete an incident form signed by parents/guardians following any incident resulting in injury or property damage. The completion of a second incident report will result in a meeting with parents/guardians, the classroom teacher, the Early Childhood Coordinator, and the Early Childhood Special Education team lead. Upon completion of the third incident report, a meeting will be held with the previously mentioned team and will result in a mutually agreed-upon plan to support the student's success in the general education setting.

ACCESS TO STUDENTS & STUDENT RECORDS

Teachers at Hand in Hand Preschool will follow the policy of Northfield School District in regard to the access to students and student's educational files and records. All parents and legal guardians will be allowed such access unless the school has on file a court order or a restraining order, dated within a year. Please see Policy 515 if you need further information. State Law mandates teachers to report suspected abuse or neglect of children to the Child Protection Agency of Rice County. It is our goal to provide support and resources to all families in our program.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is essential for a successful school experience. Please make every effort to have your child at school and on time each day. If your child is ill and unable to attend school, please report their absence to the school by calling **507-414-8771**. If your child receives transportation please inform them of the absence as well, **507-645-5720**. To help assure good health for students and alert health authorities to the presence of a specific disease, parents/guardians are asked to call the school each morning the student is absent and to notify the school later if a specific disease develops. **Please leave the following information: the child's name, the class time, and reason for absence.**

TRANSPORTATION

If your child is eligible through ECSE or SR to ride the school bus and will be absent or do not need transportation to/from preschool on any given day, please call Benjamin Bus at 507-645-5720.

ILLNESS

As most diseases are spread before they are recognized, it is impossible to prevent exposure. Parents/Guardians are urged to keep their children home if they develop any symptoms suggestive of a communicable disease. The temperature should be normal at least 24 hours **BEFORE** a student returns to school. Please do not send students who have an undiagnosed rash or a profusely runny nose to school. If a student becomes ill while at school, the parent/guardian will be called.

HEALTH SERVICES

A licensed nurse is available at the Northfield Community Education Center each school day. Health services are provided for all students and staff. Each student coming into the health office is assessed and given any necessary treatment. Parents/Guardians are contacted as appropriate. Each child is required to have an updated **immunization record** on file. We know the preschool years are a time of great growth and development; although we do not expect children in our program to be fully potty trained, we do not have adequate staffing to change diapers. Students will be expected to be working on potty training, wearing pull-ups or underwear, and be able to independently take care of bathroom needs (such as trying to use the toilet or changing a wet pull-up.)

CLOTHING

Please dress your child appropriately for the weather. We will be playing outdoors almost every day. Students will be outside when the temperature is at or above 0° F. Students will need **labeled** boots,

snow pants, hats, and mittens during the winter months. Please send a backpack with your child each day to transport the extra clothes, fun projects, and communication efforts. Please make sure your child is dressed comfortably for play. If your child is newly toilet trained or in the process of toilet training, we ask that you include a **labeled** change of clothes in their backpack should an accident occur. We find children are most comfortable in their own clothes. Durable, washable clothes and tennis shoes are most appropriate and safe for participation in all preschool activities. Making sure that buckles, buttons, belts, and snaps can be easily managed by your child will help them gain independence and self-esteem.

LATE PICKUP PROCEDURES

Morning preschool ends at 11:30 and afternoon/all-day preschool concludes at 3:45. (With the exception of Wednesday PLC schedules where a.m. preschool is from 9:45-12:00 and afternoon preschool is 1:15-3:45.) **If your child is registered for preschool extended day options, they are open 7:30-8:45 am, 11:30-12:45 pm, or 3:45-5:00 pm. Please be respectful of our teachers' prep time before and after class and be prompt in picking up and dropping off your children for preschool. **Students who have not been picked up within 5 minutes of class end times will be brought to wait in the front office. If you pick up your child later than five minutes after the end of the pre-school day, you will be charged \$1 per minute beginning with the sixth minute. If the tardiness continues, your child's enrollment will be terminated from Hand in Hand on a case by case basis.** Not only do teachers and educational assistants often have meetings or other scheduled commitments following class, but this can be very upsetting to the children, so please respect our pickup policy. Children must be picked up by a responsible caregiver. To ensure adequate supervision appropriate to the child's age, and to be consistent with state guidelines, we can only release preschool children to their siblings if they are middle school and older. If the caregiver will be a regular pickup person, they should be added to the pickup list.

EMERGENCY CLOSING OF SCHOOL

The following procedures will be observed when school is closed due to weather:

- When school is not in session, a decision to close schools will be made the night before, if possible, but not later than 7:00 a.m.
- When the weather is too severe to open school at the normally scheduled time but is improving, a decision to have a late start may be made. In this case, school will be delayed for two hours. Bus pickup and school opening times will be exactly two hours later than normal for elementary schools, however, the **Hand in Hand morning session would be closed.** The afternoon Hand in Hand session as scheduled.
- When school is in session and the decision is made to close schools, dismissal times will be set to coincide with the anticipated arrival of buses. **Parents/Guardians will be expected to pick up Hand in Hand students at the announced closing time.**

In each instance, the community will be informed by KYMN (1080AM), KDHL (920 AM) and WCCO (830) radio stations as well as WCCO-TV, KARE-TV, KSTP-TV, and KMSP-TV. If weather conditions are poor or worsening, please listen to one of these radio stations. The decision will also be listed on the homepage of the district website and parents/guardians who have emails on file will receive an email.

TUITION PROCEDURES

Hand in Hand families must stay up-to-date with payments. Each month's tuition must be paid by the last day of the respective month. Payments received after the 5th day of the following month will be charged a \$20 late fee. Preschool slots will be terminated for families that do not follow the payment policy. Please note, families do not receive a hard copy of monthly statements.

Please set up online billing/payment access with [Martha Donahoe](#) or drop payments off with her in the front office.

SNACKS/LUNCH

Snack time is a favorite time of the school day! Healthy snacks are provided by the school district food service. Please inform your teacher of any food allergies or foods your child may not eat for religious or medical reasons. Milk is provided daily to all students. All families are asked to pay an annual snack fee (fee tied to how many days per week the child attends.) Checks are made payable to “Hand in Hand Preschool”. Pathways Scholarships will cover 100% of these fees, and School Readiness scholarships cover a portion.

Lunch is offered to our full-day preschool students only. On Friday, March 17, 2023, Governor Walz signed the Free School Meals bill into law. This will take effect starting in the 2023-2024 school year. This legislation provides the reimbursement for a free lunch to students who receive meals through their school’s participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

Field trips are important to our curriculum, as they help children learn about the world around them. Past field trips have included Three Links Care Center, Northfield Library, and other neighborhood parks and businesses. We also have many fun visitors to our site! Signed permission slips are required for all children attending Hand in Hand Preschool field trips. Check monthly newsletters for additional field trip information.

TOYS FROM HOME

We request that children not bring toys from home; keeping toys at home will prevent hurt feelings and broken toys. Even toys left in backpacks can be distracting to students. Occasionally, the teachers may give the children the opportunity to bring specific toys to school for a special day, such as “Teddy Bear Day”, for our letter of the week, or “Star of the Week”. This information will be included in the weekly class notes. Please remember that even on special toy days, only non-violent toys will be allowed in school. Toy guns or weapons are never allowed.

BIRTHDAY OBSERVATIONS

Birthdays are special to children! We will make your child’s birthday or special day by providing a birthday crown and singing “Happy Birthday.” In accordance with new federal law, families will not be allowed to bring food or small gifts to share with other students but we will still make the day special in other ways. Please speak with your child’s teacher at the beginning of the school year if your family does not celebrate birthdays. We strive to be respectful of all families and their beliefs. If your child is planning on having a birthday party, we ask that invitations be mailed from home rather than passed out in school unless every child in the class is invited. This helps prevent hurt feelings.

