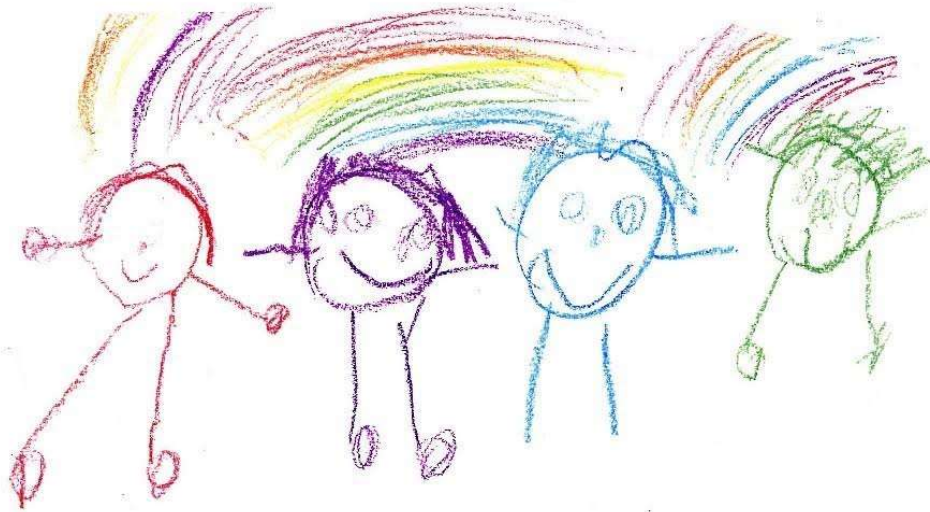


**NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
HAND IN HAND  
PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK**



**Longfellow School  
201 Orchard Street Northfield, MN 55057  
507-645-1200**

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**Important Phone Numbers**

<b>Longfellow School/Attendance</b>	<b>507-645-1200</b>
<b>Nurse’s Line</b>	<b>507-645-1205</b>
<b>Sara Line-Early Childhood Coordinator</b>	<b>507-645-1232</b>
<b>Gabriela Nieves</b>	<b>507-301-8957</b>
<b>Benjamin Bus</b>	<b>507-645-5720</b>
<b>Mary Hansen (ECFE)</b>	<b>507-664-3750</b>
<b>Martha Donahoe (preschool tuition/ E.C screening)</b>	<b>507-645-1200</b>
<b>Hiawatha Transit</b>	<b>1-866-623-7505</b>
<b>*Messages for staff may be left with the front desk</b>	<b>507- 645-1200</b>

**SAFETY**

Your children’s safety is our main concern. Please check in with the main office staff to let them know if you are picking up your child or coming for an event. Although we can often recognize parents, we would appreciate your cooperation. By making your presence known we can be more fully aware of who is in our building at all times. Please make sure you are dropping off and picking up your child each day in the classroom so the teachers know where they are 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 Thank you!

\*Longfellow School 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 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 (available in the school office). We believe that open communication between parents 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 weekly class note 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 monthly calendars of events and newsletters will be on the website and emailed out to families.

## **HAND IN HAND TEACHERS**

Hand in Hand Preschool teachers hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood 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.



## EXAMPLE OF APPROXIMATE DAILY SCHEDULE

8:45-9:00 Meet/Greet, Small Motor Activities

9:00-9:30 Circle Time: calendar with counting/patterns, weather, music/movement

9:30-10:30 Flex time: small group skill building, centers and choice time

10:30-10:45 Stories/Songs

10:45-11:00 Bathroom Break/Snacks

11:00-11:30 Outside/Gym large motor time

## 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*, *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 act 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 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. In addition, we use the IGDI’s, or Individual Growth and Development Indicators as a measure of overall developmental progress. This information allows us to group children based on skill level (flex groups) to individualize instruction.

***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, to 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, and by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask 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 imbedded 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 *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* as well as pre-literacy skills such as letters and sounds with *Ladders to Literacy* in addition to building on the *Second Step* social emotional concepts. Staff use *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 to a great start of the Kindergarten experience.

## **PEER INTERACTION/INCLUSION**

Classes in the Hand in Hand Preschool are team-taught by a licensed early childhood special education teacher and a licensed early childhood regular 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 typical 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 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 time to discuss any issues.

## **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

Parent 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 have more success in school. We offer many opportunities throughout the year for you to become involved in your child's preschool experience. Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit their child's classroom at any time. If you have a special skill or talent that you would like to share with us, (such as an instrument, a special collection, job or hobby) please see your child's teacher to make arrangements. Individual classes will offer specific dates and times for volunteer opportunities, such as "Star of the Week" reading, family events or class parties. We have parent education events and many family activities monthly. Early Childhood Family Education and Adult Basic Education also offer many opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's education. Please call Family Services at **664-3750** to request a brochure!

## **PARENT COMPONENT**

Parents of Hand in Hand students will be asked to participate a minimum of 20 hours during the year. Examples of parent involvement may include:

1. Early childhood screening (required for all Hand in Hand students)
2. Home visits by Early Childhood Teachers
3. Attending orientation
4. Fall and spring conferences
5. Classroom and field trip volunteering
6. Attend the Early Childhood Advisory Council
7. Parent/Child Activities and Lending Library
8. Guest speakers/Parent education opportunities
9. Family Events
10. Attending an Early Childhood Family Education class or Family School with your Hand in Hand student or a sibling.

## **GUIDANCE POLICY**

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 will be addressed together with parents on an individual basis. Hand in Hand staff will complete an incident form signed by parents following any incident resulting in injury or property damage. The completion of a second incident

report will result in a meeting with parents, 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 access of 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 ask about Policy JEDB if you need further information on this policy. 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 **645-1200**. If your child receives transportation please inform them of the absence as well. To help assure good health for students and alert health authorities to the presence of specific disease, parents 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 district school bus or the Hiawathaland Transit 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 or Three Rivers/Head Start at 1-866-623-7505.

## **ILLNESS**

As most diseases are spread before they are recognized, it is impossible to prevent exposure. Parents 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 Longfellow School from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. 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 are contacted as appropriate. Each child is required to have an updated **immunization record** on file

## 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 PICK UP POLICY

Morning preschool ends at 11:30 and afternoon 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.) 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 and will be charged \$1 per minute to be paid before returning to preschool. If you continue to be late picking up your child, a meeting to discuss a plan to resolve the issue will be scheduled. If the signed parent agreement is not followed, your child will be terminated from Hand in Hand. 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 pick up policy.



## 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 pick-up and school opening times will be exactly two hours later than normal for elementary schools, however, **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 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. If weather conditions are poor or worsening, please listen to one of these radio stations.

## TUITION POLICY

Tuition is to be paid one month ahead and payment is due by the first of each month. Please submit your payment to “Hand in Hand Preschool” in the lock box located near the preschool classrooms on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. Note: There is a ten-day grace period. However, a \$10 late fee will be charged for any tuition payments received after the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. Failure to follow the tuition payment policy jeopardizes your child’s enrollment in our program. A termination notice will be provided if your monthly payments are not received. Thank you for following our tuition payment expectations. You will also receive information to access your account and pay online! Any questions regarding transportation can be directed to Martha Donohoe at 507-645-1200.

## SNACKS

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/milk fee of \$48 for 2 day, \$53 for 3 days, \$90 for 4 days, and \$95 for 5 days. Checks are made payable to “Community Services”. Pathways Scholarships will cover 100% of these fees, and School Readiness scholarships cover a portion.

## 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 an apple orchard, Three Links Care Center, Northfield Library and other neighborhood parks and businesses. 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” or for our letter 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.

## 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 no longer 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, At Hand in Hand Preschool 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.

