



**Nehalem Elementary School
Preschool Program Handbook**

36300 8th St, Nehalem, OR 97131
(503) 355-3650

Welcome to the Nehalem Preschool Program, where our mission is to provide a quality preschool program that will support young children and families to learn and thrive.

Nehalem Elementary School Preschool Philosophy

We are preparing children for an ever changing world! We are proud of our high standard of care, our enriching programs, our dedicated staff, and our attention to each child and family. It is our philosophical belief that a physically and emotionally safe environment facilitates a higher degree of learning and fun. We support and celebrate the wonderful diversity of every family. We strive to help every child in our care develop his or her own understanding and appreciation of others by celebrating our differences and that which unites us. We value play as the main way for our young students to learn and grow. Our goal for all our students is that they become socially, behaviorally, and emotionally ready for entering kindergarten at age 5 by participating in a robust and varied preschool experience. We want our families to be included in their child's preschool experience and integrated into our school. Staff truly want families to feel valued and included in our program and contribute to their child's learning and development goals. If you should have any questions with regards to any of our policies or procedures, please contact your child's teacher or the school principal.



To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call, toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). TDD users can contact USDA through local relay or the Federal relay at (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866)377-8642 (relay voice users). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Program: Our program services three and four year olds. Students who turn 3 by September 1st are eligible for our preschool program.

- Preschool Promise - Preschool Promise is a model for a publicly-funded, high-quality preschool system. Preschool Promise provides opportunities for families to access and choose the preschool setting which best meets their needs. Those who do not qualify for Preschool Promise, are provided a preschool experience on a sliding scale. Currently, our preschool is free for all families.
- Priority for enrollment is given to **four year olds**.
- Students who are not given a slot at the start of the year will be placed on a waitlist.
- Preschool is staffed at a maximum of 1 teacher per 9 students, with no more than 18 students in a class.
- Transportation for students is not provided by the district.
- Our program welcomes children of all cultures and needs, and that belief is visibly represented in all activities, routines, and practices.
- We are a full day program, but do realize that not all young children are ready for a full 6 hours in preschool. We work with families to meet the needs of each child and will recommend partial day programs for students who aren't quite ready for a full day at preschool.

Hours of Operation: Our preschool program follows the Neah-Kah-Nie school district calendar as closely as possible. Our day runs from 8:10 - 2:10, Monday through Friday. Drop off is from 8:10-8:20 and pick up from 2:10-2:20 (please be prompt as our buses will be pulling up for the K-5 students at 2:20!)

Rest– Quiet Time: A whole group rest/quiet time will be provided as needed. If a whole group quiet time is not needed, accommodations will be made for students who do require one. All children will have access to a nap mat and have the option to bring a small blanket from home.

Inclusion: We support and celebrate the wonderful diversity of every family. We strive to help every child in our care develop his or her own understanding and appreciation of others by celebrating our differences and that which unites us. We do this in a variety of ways including: Books; language; diverse cultural materials; class discussion; guest facilitators; classroom displays and activities; music; seasonal celebrations; service projects; art activities.

Program personnel collaborate with our school district nurse and related service professionals to address the individual health needs of children, as applicable. We are willing and able to include children with special health needs and can make necessary expectations and accommodations as needed. All of the programs in the building are full inclusion programs. This means that we accept children with a wide range of abilities and developmental levels. We provide an opportunity for all children to participate in daily routines and activities developed with each child's individual abilities and interests in mind. Our programs provide the opportunity to learn about and celebrate differences and similarities and help to instill the standards and values that promote compassion, patience and acceptance. Our preschool does participate in developmental screenings of enrolled children, including the ASQ (Ages & Stages Questionnaire). Developmental screening is one of Oregon's Quality Rating and Improvement System standards for early learning programs to reach a 3 or 4 star quality rating. Developmental screening is an ongoing process used to identify children at risk for possible developmental, behavioral or social delays. Screening tools do not diagnose delays or disabilities, but they can help identify children who may need further evaluation and support services. The ASQ is the most-used screening tool in Oregon health care settings and available in several languages. Your child's preschool teacher will talk more to families about developmental screening in the fall before it occurs. You can find more information about the ASQ screening at www.agesandstages.com. All preschool students are screened with the ASQ within 45 days of when the child enters the program, on an annual basis, and the assessment includes information to refer children for specialized assessment when indicated.

Meals:

Students are given free breakfast, lunch and snacks or families can send in their own meals from home. As a PreK-grade 5 school, we follow the USDA guidelines and OR Department of Education School Nutrition Program Guidelines (ODE SNP) for preschool aged children for each school meal. PreK staff treat meals as a social and nutritional teaching time and sit with students to engage in conversation with students and encourage conversations between children. Preschool staff encourage healthy eating habits during mealtimes by encouraging children to try foods (but not requiring them to eat specific foods or amounts) and talking to students about good nutrition and eating habits. Students eat with other students and are offered fresh fruit and vegetables daily if they eat school lunch. We have children carry their own lunch trays and clear their own tray with assistance from adults.

Adult-Child Interactions:

Adult and child interactions provide opportunities for children to build trust, to develop an understanding of self and others, and to encourage respect for the feelings and rights of others.

Procedures:

1. Adults ask open ended questions
2. Adults stay in close proximity to students for safety and to increase repetition of what students say and extend their talk. i.e. a student may say and point to a toy whale. The adult may respond "yes, that is a whale. Look at its long tail and blow hole."
3. Adults will join students' activities for the purpose of safety, repetition, and extension (see example above).
4. Adults will focus on interests of students and activities
5. Adults will demonstrate respect and caring for children in all interactions, giving encouragement and positive comments to students.
6. Adults will acknowledge and validate students' emotions and help regulate big emotions.
7. Adults will help develop critical thinking skills and cognitive concepts in students by using open-ended questioning, modeling and other communication strategies, such as parallel talk and self-talk.
8. Adults scaffold when students need extra support understanding concepts, answering questions, or completing activities

Toilet Training: Children are not required to be toilet trained to participate in our preschool program, but are encouraged to begin toilet training at home. For those who are not toilet trained, training at school will be provided with parent support. At school, we have a relaxed, positive, and non-punitive approach to toilet training. Children are not compared to each other in their success rates and are provided individual encouragement. Parents should initiate and continue the efforts at home. Parents are welcome, and encouraged, to send in several sets of spare clothing during this time, although extra clothes will be provided at school if needed. If your child wears pull ups or diapers, please provide the teacher with supplies for changing your child at school.

Birthdays: Birthdays can be celebrated at school. We do ask parents to keep it simple, and to consult with their child's teacher first. All food served at school needs to be packaged and prepared in a commercially certified (not home) kitchen.

Arrival/Departure: Children will not be released to anyone not on the authorized forms, and not to anyone who shows up unannounced. All children must be picked up by someone over 16. If you need to discuss something with the teacher, please set up a time to meet via voicemail or email.

Preschool Attendance Policy

Coming to school regularly is important for your child's development and learning. Our preschool programs are part of the Preschool Promise Program, a state funded grant, which requires an average monthly attendance (excused and unexcused) rate of 85% for all children enrolled in our program. If a child's monthly attendance falls below this number, the office will let parents know. If a child's attendance rate does not improve, a child may be asked to exit out of our program due to limited slots and many times, a waiting list to get in. Schools may adjust expected attendance goals for students with medical needs who must leave the Preschool Program for a specified period of time during school hours for specialized services. Please talk to the principal if you feel your child falls into this category. Our school may unenroll a child who is absent for more than 15 days if we have made multiple attempts to contact the family regarding the absence.

Screen Time Policy

We follow the NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center recommendations for Screen Time in Early Childhood programs which supports the selection of technology that is developmentally appropriate, has high quality content and encourages co-engagement. Screen time is limited to less than 30 minutes per day. Students' interaction with screens is limited to the classroom's viewsonic smart board. Screen time is not allowed for children under 2 years of age. Alternate activities are available if a child does not want to participate in screen time. Any use of screens and technology tools are related to instructional goals, integrated into studies and can be valuable tools when used intentionally with children to extend engagement. We consider the screen time recommendations from public health organizations for children from birth through age 5 when determining appropriate limits on technology and media. Assistive technology is used to support children as indicated on their IFSP.

Adults do not use electronic media for personal use during the preschool day unless on a break or in case of emergency.

Suspected Child Abuse & Mandatory Reporting: As a certified provider of childcare, any staff member on site who has reasonable cause to believe that child abuse has occurred, is required by law to report the incident. This report is made to the Department of Human Services and/or to a law enforcement agency. Such a report may be cause for an investigation. If at any time you have a concern please feel free to discuss it with the principal by setting up a time to meet via email or phone.

Custody/Family/Confidentiality: It is our position that we are responsible for the well-being of your child while in our care. Therefore, we will remain neutral in marital issues and aim to maintain a professional relationship with both parents. Any and all information we are given is considered confidential and staff will receive only that information that is needed to carry out their job. We will follow all laws regarding child custody issues. In the event of a divorce or separation, we will release your child to either parent or legal guardian or anyone listed on the registration form that is authorized to pick up your child.

If there is a custody agreement or temporary restraining order that changes this information, we will need a copy of this document for our file. We will follow what is set out in the custody agreement. We will release your child to the parent who has custody on a given day or anyone they designate in writing for their day. Your child's records in our files will only be released to parents or legal guardians. We require your written permission to release these records to any other parties.

We will not speak to either parent/guardian's attorney or release any other information about your child without a subpoena. Similarly, if you have a family member on site with their own children, we will not discuss their children with you, unless their parents/guardians specifically ask us to.

If your child has an issue with another classmate (family or otherwise), we will only discuss the situation or behavior, NOT the child(ren). They will never be mentioned by name, and we ask you to adhere to these same policies if you see/hear anything in the classroom while you are on site.

Family Involvement: This is YOUR preschool! We want you involved in as many ways as possible in your child's education and care. We will meet with you three times a year for conferences (August, Late Fall and Late Spring) to update you on your child's progress and learning at school, and to gather any input or feedback from you. We will discuss and set goals for your child and family with you and be happy to provide a translator as needed. We want to know if anything changes for you or your child during the year, so please feel free to call or email the preschool teacher at any time!

School to Family Communication: NES will send school newsletters home at the beginning of each month on or before the first day of the month. We send these digitally through email. Teachers also communicate regularly to parents through the Remind app, via email, and as needed classroom newsletters.

Assessment Tools: Because your child's first five years of life are so important, we want to help you provide the best start for your child. As part of our assessment process, we provide the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) to help keep track of your child's development. You will be asked to answer questions about your child and rate different skills he or she has mastered, or may still be developing, including communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social skills.

Other assessments will be given throughout the year by the teacher such as:

- PELI - Preschool Early Literacy Indicators
- Pre-k math unit assessments

Results will be confidential and shared only with the family and teaching and administrative staff and kept here in your child's personal file for future reference. If any of the assessments show one or more areas of concern, we will contact you about getting a more involved assessment for your child.

Classroom Rules and Behavior: Following the Nehalem Elementary School handbook, we follow the same basic rules: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe. We support children's positive social and emotional development by using clearly taught expectations that we practice and review regularly. We focus on proactive and preventative strategies rather than reactive consequences. Staff will try to redirect misbehavior first and use gentle reminders that lead with empathy. Our whole school staff, PreK-grade 5, receives on-going training in Conscious Discipline which focuses on learning about emotions, self-regulation, problem solving when conflict occurs, and creating strong relationships/connections between everyone in our school community. All classes in our school receive weekly lessons from our counselor that support children's social development.

Preschool Curriculum: Our programs offer a high quality Kindergarten Readiness curriculum:

- **Literacy:** PreK On My Way
- **Math:** Pre-k Math
- **Foundational Reading Skills:** Foundations & Heggerty
- **Social Emotional:** Kimochis, Conscious Discipline

Most of the above curriculums have home-school connection resources. Information about how to support your student at home using these different curriculums will be sent home monthly. You will be provided with your child's daily schedule.

Our staff work very hard to maintain a positive, welcoming atmosphere for you and your children. We have strict mandates from the Child Care Division, Northwest Regional Early Learning Hub and the Community Action Team and Head Start, and we try to maintain those expectations, while still developing meaningful, genuine relationships with our families. Please know that our interest is ALWAYS for the betterment of your child's early education.