



Virginia Preschool Initiative

**Preschool Programs
Parent/Teacher Handbook**

2021-2022

Welcome to a wonderful year of Preschool!

This parent handbook is offered to your family as a resource with important information pertaining to your child's experience in Preschool. We recognize that you are your child's most important teacher. Viewed as a partner in your child's growth and development, you are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom, serve on committees, and help support the program.

An investment in the early years of life is one of the best investments society can make. This return is lifelong—children who experience effective early childhood programs are more likely to finish college, get high-paying jobs, and be healthier and happier later in life.

Accomack County Public Schools (ACPS) Preschool programs are comprised of Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Both programs provide support to parents in numerous ways, including supporting your child's readiness for school, reaching family goals, crisis intervention, and adult education programs. A variety of trainings are offered throughout the school year.

Preschool staff is always available to help your family and answer any questions about the program.

We are pleased to share this school year with your child and family.

Accomack County Public Schools Preschool Staff

Important Information

**Accomack County Public Schools
23296 Courthouse Ave,
Accomac, VA 23301
787-5754**

**Belinda Rippon
Director of Elementary Education**

**Hours: Monday – Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm**

Parent Rights and Responsibilities

My Rights as a Preschool Parent

- To be welcomed in the office, classroom, meetings and special events by all staff.
- To be informed regularly about my child's progress.
- To always be treated with respect and dignity.
- To expect guidance from all staff that will help my child's development.
- To have opportunities to learn about the total operation of the program.
- To be informed about community resources that will assist in improving my family's quality of life.
- To offer constructive criticism of the program.

My Responsibilities as a Preschool Parent

- To embrace Preschool as an opportunity through which I can improve the lives of my child and myself.
- To be actively involved in my child's preschool experience.
- To participate in parent trainings and workshops that will be offered throughout the year.
- To volunteer and contribute my talents to enhance the program.
- To participate in parent meetings and planning opportunities.
- To work cooperatively with staff and other parents.
- To ensure that my child is present for the Preschool experience offered.
To become involved in community programs which help to improve health, education, and recreation for all.

*We ask for the cooperation of all parents volunteering in the classrooms and during activities to not use electronic devices for conversation, texting, or photography in order to respect the confidentiality of all families and to not distract from instruction time. Thank you for your understanding of this request.

Teacher Beliefs and Mission

We believe that:

- All children learn at their own developmental rate;
- A child's self-image is an integral part of his growth;
- Students learn best through a multi-sensory approach;
- One should have high expectations for all children regardless of their circumstances;
- Children learn when the learning environment is safe, positive, and stimulating; and
- Meaningful learning occurs through play.

Therefore, our mission is to:

- Promote the principles and practices that are congruent with how children learn;
- Provide a program that enhances students' motivation, enthusiasm, and growth;
- Provide a parent education program that strengthens the bond between parent, child, home and school; and
- Provide young children with a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Program Overview

Goals:

- To provide a developmentally appropriate physical environment, experiences, and interactions to stimulate cognitive, social, physical, and emotional growth in four-year old students.
- To support the families of four-year old students and foster wholesome home environments and parent-child-family interactions.
- To encourage a home, school and community partnership for the development of each four-year old in the program.

Objectives:

- Teachers and teaching assistants will organize and deliver instruction utilizing the curriculum Frog Street.

- Parents will participate in at least two parent conferences and attend at least one parent workshop offered by the school or county.
- The staff will assist families and students by providing newsletters, parent demonstrations, family activities to enhance the instructional program and to improve home environments.
- Program leadership will collaborate and cooperate with other four-year old programs in order to share resources and staff development.
- The VPI Advisory committee will meet to coordinate services with other agencies, to make program suggestions, and recommendations to the program.
- Students will be assessed using the PreK PALS three times per year. Teachers will also collect monthly formative assessment data.

Curriculum

Frog Street Pre-K is a comprehensive, research-based program that integrates instruction across developmental domains and early learning disciplines. The cornerstones of the program include: An extensive integration of theme, disciplines, and domains; Social and Emotional development includes Dr. Becky Bailey's Conscious Discipline ®; Differentiated instruction; Equity of English and Spanish materials and instruction; and a Joyful approach to learning. Frog Street is based upon the belief that immersion in a learning-rich, Pre-K environment is critical but not sufficient. The environment and interactions must be thoughtful and purposeful. Through the use of essential questions, teachers help children connect content to their experiences, which takes them beyond rote learning and leads to thoughtful, reflective learning.

Al's Pals, Kids Making Healthy Choices is a curriculum to support children with positive social interactions and self-regulation. Children practice daily health and hygiene by proper hand washing. *The Second Step Curriculum for Early Learning* will be continued during the 2021-22 school year. This is a social-emotional curriculum that helps transform schools into supportive, successful learning environments uniquely equipped to encourage children to thrive.

Ongoing assessments are used to determine each child's developmental level and provide teachers opportunities to meet the individual needs of students. Pre and Post PreK Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening(PALS) assessments will be another measure of growth.

Parents have the opportunity to meet with teachers throughout the year during home and/or parent conferences. You will have the opportunity to discuss the progress of your child and develop learning goals for your child. Parents are expected to attend parent workshops offered by the county. Children with behavior and mental health concerns may receive services through a partnership with a day treatment provider. This day treatment provider may provide on-site behavioral specialists to work with children in their classroom to assist with developing coping skills so children can be successful in the school setting.

The school day provides an appropriate balance of active and quiet activities. All students participate in regular school experiences (art, music, P.E. and library) and special events as the schedule allows.

Program Locations

The VPI program is located in 5 schools – **AES, CES, KES, MES, and PES**. Each class is composed of 20 or less students, one classroom teacher, and a teaching assistant. The program follows the regular school calendar.

Classroom

A Typical Day in Preschool

Classroom hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm.

8:00	Arrival/Bathroom/Breakfast/Morning Work
8:30	Morning Message/Second Step Lesson
8:40	Choice Time — 2 open centers and 2 adult led activities
9:00	Circle time
9:25	Center Time
10:15	Content Instruction*
11:15	Snack
11:45	Music and Movement
12:10	Specials
12:50	Lunch/Recess
1:45	Bathroom/Read Aloud or Language Play
2:00	Nap Time
3:00	Wake Up/Pack Up
3:30	Dismissal

*Content instruction may include phonemic awareness, read-aloud, social studies or STEM instruction.

The Physical Environment

The classroom environment promotes the interaction of children with materials, other children, and adults. The environment is set up with learning centers, allowing children to make choices based on individual needs and interests. It is adaptable, flexible, safe, and child-centered.

Block Area – where children experiment with balance, patterns, enclosures, and symmetry. They play on their own to solve problems, sort, compare, pretend, and imitate others.

Art Area – where children explore, combine, and transform a variety of materials. They cut, fold, flatten, assemble, take apart, and create new objects.

Dramatic Play Area – where children experience the joy of make-believe using props, costumes, dolls, and the environment to act out familiar roles, reenact events, dramatize stories, and practice language. Children will have numerous opportunities to express their feelings, use language to communicate roles, and to respond to one another.

Language and Literature Area – where children enjoy using books, writing and drawing tools, the computer, pictures, charts, flashcards, magazines, and other literacy materials to stimulate reading and writing.

Manipulative Table Toys Area – where children play with tools, simple games, puzzles, small toys with connecting parts, wheels, patterns, counting and sorting materials, and cubes. Working near or sharing with others, children solve complex problems, expand new skills, and explore game playing and rules for play.

Sand and Water Area – where children use hands and utensils for filling, mixing, dumping, digging, molding, patting, splashing, stirring, and sifting. There they learn about texture, weight, and measurement.

Computer Station – where students explore beginning language, mathematics, and science concepts while stimulating their minds.

Listening Station – where children use private headphones to listen to favorite stories and rhymes.

Housekeeping Station – where children role play utilizing a variety of cooking utensils, pretend appliances, and extend their imaginations while sharing and helping others.

Books – where children sit in a comfortable environment to read and relax. Strengthens cognitive, listening, and language skills.

Attendance, Absences, and Tardiness

It is expected that all students will attend class daily except in the case of illness. If your child has a fever or communicable disease, please do not expose the other children by sending your child to school. If your child is absent from school, you will need to call the school office to notify the staff within the first hour of school. Otherwise, you will receive a call from the attendance office. Tardiness and early releases are interruptions to the instructional program and are discouraged. If you move from your current location, please notify the school ASAP.

Custody Documents

Custody papers must be on file for our records. With proper identification, all parents/ legal guardians have a right to visit the school unless a court order specifically denies this right.

Child Records

Child records are kept at each individual school. All records are confidential and exchange of information with other agencies occurs only with parental consent. If you transfer to another school, records will be sent to the new school after the parent provides consent and signs a transfer of records document.

Supplies and Toys

Each Preschool classroom is equipped with age appropriate books, blocks, puzzles, toys and other supplies. It is not necessary to send toys or other items to school unless the teacher has purposely scheduled *Share Time* (similar to show and tell). Preschool and transportation staff are not responsible for lost, stolen, or broken items so please be thoughtful when deciding what items to send in for *Share Time*.

Parents may supply the following for their child:

- Weather appropriate full change of clothes (clothing to be changed seasonally)
- A blanket for rest time
- A full size backpack or tote bag to carry a folder to and from school

Child Behavior

The Preschool programs support children in developing self-regulation skills and positive social relationships, along with kindergarten readiness. Education staff, children and parents work together to maintain an effective classroom environment conducive to learning. The long term goals for children are to provide a setting where children develop a sense of self-control, are able to understand the reasons for limits that are set, and develop a sense of both being respected and respecting other's rights and feelings.

There are times when children cannot or do not choose to demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior. At these times, steps will be put in place to provide every child the opportunity to develop skills to problem solve and develop self-regulation.

Examples of behaviors that may require intervention are behaviors that are continuous, excessive and dangerous. Such behaviors include, but are not limited to biting, kicking, throwing objects, causing harm to self or others, and oppositional behavior such as running from the teachers, the classroom or away from the playground or school bus. All intervention plans will be made with parents input.

Discipline

For many young children coming to school is a new experience. As students adapt to this change, they may act out. If this occurs, the classroom teacher will use the following guidelines:

- Give a verbal warning or age appropriate time out.
- Contact or notify the parent either by phone or written note.
- May request a conference with the parent, child, and/or administrator.

If the child's unacceptable behavior continues to occur after the previous steps have been taken, the child may be:

- Referred to the Student Behavior Intervention Team (SBIT).
- Temporarily reduced to part-time participation.
- Discontinued from the program.

Every effort will be made to work with the child and the family to meet and solve the problems. However, our priority is to provide a safe, academic environment for students and staff each day.

Communication

The program provides parent meetings, program and classroom newsletters, notes, and telephone calls as important components of regular and effective communication between school and home. Please check your child's backpack daily for important classroom, program and community information. **Phone calls to the classroom during instructional time are restricted so teachers can devote their full attention to the children.** You are always welcome in your child's classroom to participate in their educational day. However, if you would like to discuss your child's school experience a conference can be scheduled before or after school or request a home visit.

Outdoor Play

Your child will participate in outdoor activities daily as the weather permits. During cooler weather please send your child to school with a coat, hat and gloves. When inclement weather occurs, teachers will lead the class in alternate indoor recreational activities. If your child is well enough to attend school, the expectation is that your child is well enough to go outside. It is recommended that children wear tennis shoes. **Please do not send your child with sandals or flip-flops, as these shoes can be unsafe during active play.**

Disability Services

The Preschool programs encourage the participation of children with disabilities. Staff screens each child for development of self-help, social, motor, language, speech, and cognitive skills. Preschool programs collaborate with ACPS Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) department to serve children with identified needs. If your child is found eligible for ECSE, services will be provided through the development of an Individual Educational Program (IEP). If you have concerns about your child's learning or development, please contact your child's teacher or a principal at the school.

Field Trips

Field trips are used as an integrated experience that enhances your child's learning. Children are expected to use school transportation to a field trip. You are encouraged to volunteer for field trips. Parents are responsible for the transportation and supervision of siblings who attend a field trip. Children and teachers are provided USDA approved meals for field trips.

Toilet Training

Some VPI students may not be fully toilet trained when they start attending VPI in the fall. Toilet training is like any other self-care skill that children need to learn. Children who are learning to become toilet trained will be provided with frequent opportunities to visit the bathroom individually to teach them a step-by-step process. Families will be expected to work with teacher to reinforce toileting expectations at home.

Accidents are to be expected. Staff will work with parents as a team. Coordination with the family concerning toilet training is imperative. Teachers and parents will meet to establish common goals and proper methods. Parents of children being toilet trained are encouraged to dress their child in suitable clothing (easy to get on and off). Parents should provide several changes of clothing.

Rest/Naps

Children usually need rest time to help them relax and unwind from their busy morning schedule. A quiet time in the daily schedule enables them to have a positive afternoon and arrive home ready for their time with family. A rest cot will be provided for your child. You may send a small blanket from home for your child to use during rest time. Your child's blanket will be sent home at the end of each week to be washed. Please return blankets the first day of each week.

Characteristics of the Preschool Child

- Needs to develop a good self- image
- Needs a feeling of acceptance
- Is curious about his/her environment and seeks answers to many questions
- Needs 10 to 12 hours of sleep
- Expend much energy
- Is active, alert, and enjoys vigorous play
- Begins to develop small muscle control by using varied manipulative materials
- Can sit still when the activity engages his/her interest
- Likes to manipulate and experiment with many concrete materials
- Enjoys listening to stories, rhymes, poems, and music
- Takes pleasure in dramatic play
- Enjoys the companionship of peers, but finds it difficult to share

Classroom experience allows students to:

- Make choices about their activities
- Engage in activities related to reading readiness;
- Engage in activities that relate to daily life experiences;
- Move about as they explore and examine the learning environment; and
- Assume responsibility for selecting, using, and cleaning up materials as they work cooperatively on projects.

The teacher models behavior that promotes learning by:

- Asking questions
- Planning activities; and
- Providing materials of student interest.

Parent Engagement

Parent support and engagement are the keys to a successful program. As “partners” in education, parents are encouraged to demonstrate support in the following ways:

- Ensure daily attendance of the child
- Participate in conferences with the child’s teacher
- Participate in workshops to learn how to assist the child at home
- Work in their child’s classroom at least twice during the school year
- Provide program feedback to the school on aspects of the program

Health and Safety

The Preschool programs support and promote the health and welfare of all children. Individual health records are maintained for each child that includes medical information provided by the parents such as the immunization record, and any developmental and speech/language screenings. At a minimum, all children must have a physical, hearing and vision screenings, as well as current immunizations.

Program staff will inform parents of all screening results and collaborate with parents to ensure the healthy development of their child. Preschool programs work closely with health agencies throughout the community to help each family gain access to ongoing medical services.

Health Requirements and Screenings

Every Preschool student is required to have the following:

Physical

Comprehensive Physical Examination

Must have a Comprehensive Physical Examination dated within one year of starting school.

Vision and Hearing Screenings:

ACPS recognizes screenings reported as part of the child’s preschool physical examination required under COV 22.1-270 for vision and hearing.

If, the health care provider did not perform a vision or hearing then the school nurse will follow:

All children (through grade three) within 60 business days of initial enrollment, shall be screened in the area of vision/hearing to determine if a referral for an evaluation for special education and related services is indicated.

Developmental Screening

VPI students are screened by teachers and ACPS staff using the *Brigance*. If the screening indicates a concern, your child will be rescreened or referred for further testing and diagnosis. The results and recommendations will be shared with you in writing and parent conference, if necessary.

Medications

In order to ensure your child's safety during school hours you must notify Preschool staff of any allergies and medications that pertain to your child prior to school entry.

If your child has a chronic medical condition, food or other allergy, the parent and physician must complete and sign applicable ACPS medical forms before the first day of school. Such conditions include, but are not limited to, allergies that require an EpiPen, asthma inhalers or nebulizer treatments.

If your child requires medication during school hours a doctor's order, prescription form or ACPS *Medication Request Form* signed by both you and the physician must be on file. Medicine must be in the original prescription container with the prescription label attached. Medications must be delivered to school by the parent, not sent on the school bus or in the backpack. Medication will only be administered by school nurses or trained medical designee. If possible, please time your child's medication outside of school hours.

Food and Nutrition

All ACPS families receive free breakfast and lunch due to our CEP, Community Eligibility Program, status with the state of Virginia. VPI students are included in this program and eligibility.

VPI students may pack their lunch for school or field trips; however, nutritionally balanced meals are encouraged.

If your child has food allergies or needs special food preparation or substitutes, please inform your child's teacher and the school nurse and provide documentation from your child's doctor.

Accidents and Incidents

In the event that your child is injured during school hours, teachers or school building staff will notify you with a written note or telephone call. In the event of a more serious accident or injury, staff will notify you immediately with a telephone call. School nurses will assess and treat the injury in accordance with ACPS policy. In the event that you cannot be reached, individuals listed on the emergency contact list will be contacted. For your child's safety, it is very important to keep your *Emergency Contact Form and Authorized Persons Pick-Up* updated at all times.

Illness and Communicable Diseases

Any child with a suspected communicable disease, which includes but is not limited to, ringworm, impetigo, active lice, conjunctivitis (pink eye) or who has an unexplained rash, draining sore, a temperature of 100° F, vomiting or diarrhea is not permitted to remain in school.

In the event your child becomes ill at school, you will be notified to come to the school and pick up your child. If you are unable to be reached a person from your emergency contact list will be called to pick up your child. **It is very important to keep your *Emergency Contact Form and Authorized Persons Pick-Up* updated at all times.** If your child becomes ill at home, please keep him/her at home until the illness is over. If your child has a contagious illness, please consult with your child's physician, the health department or school nurse before sending the child back to school.

Virginia's Birth to 5 Early Learning and Development Standards – new 2021

Virginia's new set of comprehensive early learning and development standards for young children, birth to age five is found on the VDOE website:

<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/curriculum/index.shtml>

The new standards focus on five Areas of Development: Approaches to Play and Learning; Social and Emotional Development; Communication, Language, and Literacy Development; Health and Physical Development and Cognitive Development.

All birth to five programs are expected to implement the new standards by Fall 2021.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Under Virginia law, school employees are required to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services. Staff must be alert to signs of abuse and report any suspicions to the building principal.

According to Virginia law, an abused or neglected child is any child under 18 years of age whose parents or caregiver:

- Causes or threatens to cause a non-accidental physical or mental injury Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing or health care
- Abandons the child
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate supervision in relation to a child's age and level of development or
- Commits, or allows to be committed, any illegal sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

Communicating Concerns

It is the program's mission to work closely with children and their families to create a positive learning experience. Open channels of communication and a cooperative attitude will provide solutions to most concerns. If you have a concern about your child's development, discuss it first with your child's teacher. If you have a concern about

program policy or protocol it should be discussed with the building level administration. We encourage families to share comments, compliments, and suggestions for improvement.

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