



## WELCOME!

# EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICIES & PROCEDURES

---

Dear Early Childhood families,

Welcome to our preschool program. We very much look forward to getting to know our new students and families as well as welcoming back our returning students! For those of you who are new to the Union Ridge early childhood program, we are highlighting below some key policies in our program as well as sharing a few tips concerning separation anxiety and the transition into preschool. Each family will receive a booklet entitled, *A Parent's Guide to Preschool*, which highlights in more detail our program goals, curriculum, and philosophy.

### OUR PROGRAM

- ✓ Developmentally appropriate, play-based program focused on the growth and development of the whole child (cognitive, social-emotional, physical)
- ✓ Our program was recently awarded the *Gold Circle of Quality* rating by *Excelerate Illinois*, the state's quality recognition and improvement system for early learning and development programs
- ✓ **Creative Curriculum** is research-based and aligned to the *Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards* (IELDS)

### EARLY CHILDHOOD TEAM

**Mrs. Paulina Martin (teacher):** I've been teaching preschool at Union Ridge for 16 years. I received my Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from DePaul University and my Master's in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on ESL from Concordia University. My favorite part about working with preschoolers is the unique experience of viewing the world through their eyes!

**Mrs. Nina Hessler (teacher):** I have worked at Union Ridge for 10 years in various grade levels. I started my career in preschool, and I am very happy to be back in the preschool classroom. I received my Master's in Early Childhood Special Education and Developmental Therapy from Elmhurst University. I love working with preschoolers for many reasons, but I think the most amazing part of teaching these little learners is watching them discover their world and master skills for the first time.

**Mrs. Stephanie Haddad (classroom aide):** I've worked at Union Ridge for seven years. I received my Bachelor's Degree in secondary education at Northeastern Illinois University. I love working with preschoolers because even though they are so small, they are capable of such big things!

**Mrs. Elona Shkira (classroom aide):** This is my third year at Union Ridge Preschool. I received my Bachelor's Degree in Albanian Language and Literature and I worked as a teacher of various grades in Albania. I enjoy the opportunity to work with and help preschool students!

## FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL and SESSION DAYS/HOURS 2021-22

**First day of school: Tuesday, September 7, 2021**

**AM Session:** Monday-Friday 8:30-11:00 AM

**PM Session:** Monday-Friday 12:30-3:00 PM



☆ If at some point during the school year we go to full remote-learning mode, you will be sent a link to our EC full remote-learning plan by e-mail and through *ClassDojo*

\* We will be using the *ClassDojo* program to stay connected with families this school year. On *ClassDojo*, we will also post notes and information. You will have received an invitation to join *ClassDojo* through your e-mail or by text. Make sure that the office has your current, preferred email address and telephone number on file. *ClassDojo* is available as a free app to use on any device or your computer. If you do not have access to a computer or device, please let us know and we will work on accommodating you.

## SCHEDULE

- **Arrival**
- **Circle Time** (plan for the day, news, calendar, weather, songs, stories, whole-group lessons) - goal: establish a community of learners
- **Learning Centers** (writing, art, science, math, sensory table, dramatic play, blocks, legos, fine-motor, library, trains, and more)
- **Small Group Learning** (focused lessons)
- **Outdoor Play Session/Gym**
- **Snack will be sent home this school year**
- **Dismissal**

## PRECAUTIONS in light of the COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- ✓ Smaller class size (15 per session, as opposed to 20)
- ✓ Compulsory mask-wearing indoors at all times and outdoors when unable to maintain social distance
- ✓ Handwashing and hand-sanitizing
- ✓ Social distancing (limited capacity at learning centers, properly-spaced seating, spaced areas for lining up)
- ✓ Increased sanitation of classroom and materials
- ✓ Increased opportunities for outdoor play and learning

## Photos of Classroom:



Mrs. Martin's Classroom



Mrs. Hesslau's Classroom





Dramatic Play (kitchen)



Science Center



Writing/Art Center



Block Building





Classroom Library Center

## ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

Please review the arrival/dismissal procedures carefully so that the transition into and out of the program runs smoothly and **SAFELY** for all. Some important reminders:



### ★ DISMISSAL LOCATION:

A.M.: Flagpole Entrance (Carl Cassata Ln.)

P.M.: Flagpole Entrance (Carl Cassata Ln.)

### ★ TIMES:

A.M.: Arrival at 8:30 AM, Dismissal at 11:00 AM

P.M.: Arrival at 12:30 PM, Dismissal at 3:00 PM

★ You will be required to park and walk your child to their designated arrival and dismissal location above everyday. **This is different from past years-there will be no car valet line!**

✓ All students and families will need to wear masks in school and on school grounds when dropping off and picking up. Surgical masks that are disposable are preferred and considered safest for students and adults.

✓ Everyone should have filled out a pick-up form, which informs us of who is allowed to pick up your child. Children are released only to those who are listed on the pick-up form! If somebody else will be picking up your child, let the office know and/or send your child's teacher an email. If you need to add or remove anyone from the pick-up form, please let us know.

✓ When children arrive, they will sanitize their hands at their designated arrival/dismissal location. Children will enter the school building, where two teachers/aides will be present to supervise. Upon dropping off your child, parents are instructed to leave immediately. Parents are not allowed to enter the school building or linger at the arrival area at this time. This rule is in place because the more parents and younger siblings are assembled in the area at drop-off, the more difficult it is for us to keep track of our students. We know you want to stick around, but this is a matter of safety. The rest is up to us! Thank you for understanding! If you have any questions or concerns, it is better to address them through ClassDojo or a written note placed in your child's backpack.

✓ As we exit the classroom for dismissal, children will be instructed to WAIT until their teacher dismisses them to their parent/guardian. For safety reasons, children are not allowed to run directly to their guardian upon dismissal. We need to dismiss individually. This way, we will learn to match your child up with you. Please be patient with us, as we have a whopping 50+ faces to learn – it may take us some time! You'll be provided with large name tags (with your child's name) to hold up when picking up your child. Please make sure to bring these daily and hold them up during dismissal.

✓ Upon pick-up: Once we dismiss your child, please also exit the drop-off area promptly. We understand that you may want to talk to us, ask us questions about how the day went, etc. However, at this time our priority is safely dismissing the students. If you have a question or need to talk to us, please send a message through ClassDojo or give us a phone call instead. It's not that we don't want to talk, but we need to clear the dismissal area so that all students are dismissed safely. Again, thank you for understanding.

✓ If you happen to be late picking up your child (and we know you won't be!), we will walk the child to the front office and you may pick him/her up from there. Children are often afraid when their parents are late, so please be on time. Children who arrive late will need to be escorted to the main office.

✓ Lastly (lots of information, we know!), please communicate all of the above procedures with anyone who may be picking up your child so that they know what to do.

## TIPS ON SEPARATION ANXIETY

### What parents can do:

- ✓ Keep a positive outlook - talk up school at home
- ✓ Understand that the transition can take time, sometimes weeks, and building security and trust is a process
- ✓ When separating, get down on child's level, smile, say goodbye, and don't show hesitation or worry (children pick up on your anxiety) - if you are not confident and committed, it may be difficult for your child to transition

### What we do:

- ✓ Stay positive
- ✓ Stick to a routine - children take comfort in knowing what to expect. Daily schedule has consistency.
- ✓ Plan with family if child is not transitioning well

## BIRTHDAYS

In our preschool, birthdays are celebrated by the class singing *Happy Birthday* and your child receives a crown and gift from the program. We keep it low-key. Food is not allowed from the home to distribute to children (this is school district policy). Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, goody bags are also not allowed to be distributed this school year. Also, if for any reason you don't celebrate birthdays or certain holidays, inform us if you don't want your child to participate in these celebrations or certain projects.

## SNACK

A healthy snack is provided by our program. Children will receive a snack to take home each day. No food or drinks are allowed from home. Please make sure the school and teachers are aware of any allergies or food restrictions.

## TOYS

We know that children have favorite toys and are sometimes eager to bring them along into preschool. However, this often presents us with a problem. Children then focus solely on the toys they've brought in and do not become engaged in school activities, they may be distracted, they may lose their toy, other children may feel jealous, etc. It's best to avoid the potential problems that arise from bringing in toys from home. Leave these at home and explain to your child that there are school toys and home toys.

## CLOTHING/LABELS

Please dress your child comfortably to preschool. Here, we work with play-doh, clay, paint, go outdoors to the playground and for walks. It's a place for exploration and comfort is essential. We've had children who've hesitated to paint or have missed out in exploring the properties of clay because they feared getting messy – Play clothes are the answer!

Also, make sure your child wears comfortable, safe shoes. We play on the playground and run around in the gym and so flip-flops are not allowed. Sneakers/gym shoes with laces or Velcro straps are your best option. Flip flops and loose shoes with no laces or straps are not safe.



Label, label, label. Make sure, when colder days begin to approach, to label your child's accessories (hats, scarves, mittens) with their name or initials on the tag. We have so many duplicates (many children wear the same hats/scarves, etc.) and it is much easier to keep track of these accessories if they're labeled. You wouldn't believe how big our lost-and-found pile grows by the end of the school year! So, label, label, label!

## **BACKPACKS/NOTES HOME**

Please make sure that your child's backpack is standard, full-size (the smaller backpacks that are sometimes marketed for preschool-age kids are too small for our needs). Our wonderful teacher aides will check backpacks each day and most mail will be distributed regularly. If you have any items, such as forms or notes to teachers, you may place them inside your child's backpack and they will be checked daily. Please only use the main compartment of the backpack.

## **BATHROOM PROCEDURES/INCIDENTS**

In order to attend our program, each child needs to be fully potty trained. That means they are able to identify a full bladder and respond to the urge to go. It also means they can tell an adult they need to go (for instance, when we are on the playground outside). Being fully potty trained means your child can independently pull down his pants and underwear and sit on the toilet unassisted. Children must also be able to wipe themselves unassisted. Your child will also need to know how to change clothing in the event of an accident. We are not allowed to assist students in the bathroom. We understand that accidents do sometimes occur and that is why we ask you to bring an extra change of clothing to keep at school. In the event of an accident, we will provide your child with the change of clothing and ask them to change. We will place the soiled clothing into a plastic bag along with a note. Please bring another set of clothing to replace the set used. Pull ups are not allowed. If your child has frequent accidents and is not fully potty trained, we will speak with you and put a plan of action in place. Occasional accidents are normal - so please do not get stressed out if they occur sometimes.

## **COMMUNICATION**

- ✓ Check email/*ClassDojo* regularly for school-wide information and remote learning plans (if necessary) (\*parents will receive an invite via e-mail and/or text to join the free communication app *ClassDojo*)
- ✓ Newsletter updates distributed monthly
- ✓ Preschool-specific calendar distributed monthly
- ✓ Artwork and paperwork will be sent home regularly
- ✓ Take-home kits and developmentally appropriate homework will be assigned at times
- ✓ Parents will periodically receive information relating to areas of child development and learning and how they can enhance learning at home
- ✓ Conferences held on only an as needed/requested basis (by phone this school year) for preschool
- ✓ Progress reports distributed twice per school year



Lots of information, we know! For many of you, this is your child's, as well as your family's, first school experience – an important transition, just one of many, in life. Help us work together to make your child's and family's school experience a successful one for all! If you have any questions/concerns, feel free to contact us and we'll be happy to talk. Again, we are very excited about getting to know your child and witnessing their progress over the school year!

Thank you, most sincerely,  
The EC Team

Welcome, our newest Union Ridge Huskies!

