

NORTHFIELD HAND IN HAND PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK



"My daughter has blossomed under the guidance and care of Hand in Hand staff. Before coming to preschool here, she was painfully shy. Now, she has conversations with all sorts of people and is academically excelling!"

-Kristen Lindholm, educator

Longfellow School
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INTRODUCTION

This handbook was designed to highlight key policies/ procedures and give you specific information regarding *Hand in Hand Preschool*. We ask that you read through it and keep in an accessible place where you can refer to it when 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, some 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 seek to clarify concerns. 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.

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. Many continue their education and hold masters degrees in Education. All staff participate in district training, professional development as well as contributing to the Professional learning Communities.

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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

9:30-10:00 Small Group/Stations for specific skill building

10:00-10:30 Center/Choice time

10:30-10:45 Stories/Songs

10:45-11:00 Bathroom Break/Snacks

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

CREATIVE CURRICULUM

One of the materials used to support our curriculum at *Hand in Hand Preschool* is *The Creative Curriculum* by Dianne T. Dodge and Laura J. Colker. The philosophy behind this curriculum is that young children learn best by *doing*. Learning isn't just repeating what someone else says; it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn firsthand about the world we live in. Play provides the foundation for academic or "school" learning. It is the preparation children need before they learn highly abstract symbols such as letters (which are symbols for sounds) and numbers (which are symbols for number concepts). Play enables us to achieve the key goals of our early childhood curriculum, as play is the "work" of young children.

The *Creative Curriculum* identifies goals in all areas of development:

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, 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.

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, before we begin to introduce 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, shapes, letters,

sounds and colors. Staff use Zaner Bloser curriculum to begin to introduce proper strokes and letter formation (fine motor) skills. The students are also familiarized with school expectations

and routines such as circle time, stations and lining up to go outside. The Kindergarten readiness class lays the foundation to a great start of the Kindergarten experience.

Our staff also participates in the Northfield Public Schools Professional Learning Community with all district Early Educators. The PLC develops Early Education outcomes based on the Minnesota Department of Education Early Childhood Indicators of Progress and aligned with the larger district mission, vision and goals. As a result of our work in our PLC groups we have established our Essential Learnings and have implemented new materials to support our curriculum in the areas of large and small motor development, literacy and social/emotional needs.

HOW INCLUSION WORKS IN OUR PROGRAM

Some classes in the *Hand in Hand Preschool* are taught by two teachers – an early childhood special education teacher and an early childhood regular education teacher- in a team approach. Other classes are taught by an early childhood school readiness education teacher, with an early childhood special education teacher providing consultation and direct instruction to students receiving special education services. At least one educational assistant is also assigned to each classroom. Teachers are licensed by the State of Minnesota to teach young children.



Peer Interaction

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

Staff members use portfolios and checklists to document progress of all students. In addition, IEP objectives are developed for all Special Education students. The documented progress and portfolios are shared at conferences with families, and given to the families at the end of the year.

Conferences

Conferences are offered twice yearly (fall and spring). These conferences 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 or class parties. We have three parent education events throughout the year and as always, you are welcome in your child's classroom at any time, the door is open!

Early Childhood Family Education and Adult Basic Education offers many opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's education. Please call Family Services at **664-3750** to request a brochure with class descriptions.

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. Parent/Child literacy bags
7. Guest speakers/Parent education opportunities
8. 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.

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.



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 **645-1205**. 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.



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 and works under the District school nurse's supervision. 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.

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^o F. Students will need boots, snow pants, hats and mittens during the winter months. All clothing items need to be labeled with the child's first and last name. If the temperature is lower than -10^o F wind chill, children will be inside.

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.

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" with the monthly tuition coupon in the lock box located near the preschool classrooms on the 1st floor. Note: There is a ten-day grace period. However, a \$10 late fee will be charged for any tuition payments received after the 10th 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. Please submit your payment to Hand in Hand preschool in the lock box located near the preschool classrooms on the first floor. Monthly tuition coupon books are available upon request by calling Mary at 664-3750. You will also receive information to access your account and pay online!

TRANSPORTATION

If your child is eligible through ECSE or SR to ride the district school bus or the Three Rivers headstart bus and will be absent or not need transportation to/from preschool on any given day, please call Benjamin Bus at 507-645-5720 or Three Rivers/Headstart at 1-866-623-7505

LATE PICK UP POLICY

Morning preschool ends at 11:30 (with the exception of PLC Wednesdays in which class ends at 12) and afternoon preschool concludes at 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.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

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. It is necessary for us to know where students should be sent in the event school would be closed during the day. A form requesting this information will be sent home during orientation.



SNACKS

Snack time is a favorite time of the school day! Snacks are provided by the parents. We will remind parents to provide snacks periodically through the weekly classroom note. The State Health Department requires that all snacks be store bought. 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 milk fee of \$15.00 for 2 day, \$20.00 for 3 days, and \$25.00 for 4 day. Checks are made payable to “Community Services”.

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* 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”. 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." If you would like, you may send a store-bought treat for your child's birthday, although it is not expected. 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.

Important Phone Numbers

Longfellow School	507-645-1200
Nurse's Line/Attendance	507-645-1205
Sara Line-School Readiness Lead	507-645-1232
Gabriela Nieves	507-645-1257
Benjamin Bus	507-645-5720
Mary Hansen (tuition)	507-664-3750