Kindergarten

A Handbook for Parents

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Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Welcome

Welcome to kindergarten in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. This year will be a very important one for your child and you. It may be your child's first experience with public school. Going to school should be a happy experience. This first year may well determine the direction of future learning for your child. It is the purpose of this handbook to share with you how the kindergarten staff in our school system will be working with your child to ensure his or her total development.

The kindergarten program in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is designed to meet the special needs of five-year olds. It provides for these needs in a child-centered environment that is equipped with a wealth of concrete, open-ended instructional materials.

The name "kindergarten" means "a garden of children" where all children grow and develop as unique human beings. As parents and educators, we need to keep in mind that a five-year old has a lifetime of learning ahead. A good kindergarten program provides young children with the kind of foundation that will make all formal education effective.

Parental involvement helps make a positive and rewarding experience for your child.

5 Year Olds

Your child is a special person who neither looks, acts, or thinks like another child. There are, however, some characteristics that are common to all five-year olds.

Physical Characteristics

The kindergarten child:

- is quiet for only short periods of time
- needs frequent change in activity
- has good motor control, has developed muscles to run, throw, and jump, but may need to build muscle strength to hold a pencil or pick up a crayon
- has usually developed hand, eye, and foot preference

Social Characteristics

The kindergarten child:

- needs attention and approval
- is happy, friendly and cooperative
- can be a great talker – needs to have time to express him/herself

Emotional Characteristics

The kindergarten child:

- is seeking acceptance and a sense of belonging
- responds to praise, affection, encouragement and consistent direction
- needs to be free from pressure
- enjoys a variety of activities, but finds security in knowing what comes next
- searches for trust, fairness, and definite standards
- is eager and able to carry some responsibility

Cognitive Characteristics

Kindergarten children have a range of capabilities. Generally they:

- are active, interested and curious
- are eager to learn
- learn by doing things themselves – observing, questioning, imitating, examining, exploring and investigating
- have a short but expanding attention span
- gain understanding of relationships through music, art, movement and construction
- are interested in stories, books and records

Curriculum

Kindergarten teachers use these guidelines in their planning:

1. The kindergarten program is designed to achieve long-range goals for all children in all domains – social, emotional, cognitive, and physical.
2. Children are actively engaged in their learning. They observe, they interact with materials and with people, and they ask questions as they explore new concepts and expand their understanding.
3. The curriculum provides richness and a wide variety of learning experiences, materials, and instructional strategies to accommodate a broad range of children's individual differences in prior experiences, maturation rates, styles of learning needs and interests.
4. Children's sense of competence and enjoyment of learning is strengthened by allowing opportunities for choice and by providing experiences in which children feel successful.
5. Promoting children's literacy development is a primary responsibility in kindergarten. Kindergarten literacy experiences are designed to develop a love of and discussion about books, recognize and distinguish certain features of print and how it works, familiarity with the mechanics of reading and writing, identification and use of letters, awareness of sounds and rhymes in a language along with manipulating sounds in the language, and expansion of vocabulary and oral language.
6. Children's school experiences are enhanced through the development of home-school connections built on a foundation of mutual respect and support for cultural diversity.

The Kindergarten Program

An effective kindergarten program is broad enough in scope to accommodate the varying ranges in rate, timing and learning development that exist in young children. These needs center upon the whole child – mentally, physically, emotionally and socially!

The program for your child is planned by each teacher who knows about the ways young children learn best. These are natural ways for children to use their capacities, to grow and to learn many skills. The kindergarten program captures this natural process through planned opportunities in these areas:

Language and Literacy Development

Language development involves speaking, listening, writing and reading. Young children are excellent language learners. They have learned to communicate comfortably with others and are already very aware of written language.

During the kindergarten year, students need to experience the enjoyment of reading while they learn the foundational strategies and skills that will enable them to read independently. Students learn these skills to read independently as they listen and respond to a variety of texts. They enjoy listening to stories, relating characters and events to their own life experiences, dramatizing stories, and responding to stories through art and writing activities. They can extend their oral language skills when given opportuni-

ties to express themselves, and they can learn how language is recorded to convey experiences and ideas as they observe their experiences and ideas being written. Kindergarten students will engage in word play, listen and respond to children's literature, and build reading and writing concepts, skills, and strategies. In our kindergarten program, children have the opportunity to:

- listen to and join in the reading of stories, songs, poems
- respond to stories through discussion, drama, art, music and movement
- develop and use lists, signs, messages
- work on projects collaboratively with other children
- dictate stories
- explore sounds, letters, words, etc.
- experiment with the writing process
- browse through self-selected books, magazines, newspapers

Mathematical and Scientific Development

The five-year old child acquires an understanding of mathematics and science through repeated experiences using concrete, manipulative material. The use of dittos and workbooks is strongly discouraged. Scientific and mathematical development occurs when children have opportunities to:

- sort and classify
- count
- match
- measure
- solve problems of interest to the child
- recognize numerals
- become aware of time intervals (days, months & seasons)
- recognize basic shapes & spatial relationships
- develop number concepts
- explore, question, observe, predict, discuss the world around him (living things, color, shape, size, texture, etc.)

Physical Development

The physical development and well-being of each child is very important to his overall growth and development. The kindergarten teacher recognizes that the young child is still developing his physical stature as well as attitudes toward good health. The program allows opportunities for each child to:

- develop muscular control and coordination
- develop a sense of rhythm
- find acceptable outlets for tensions and emotions
- learn to care for his body and value physical health
- learn and practice rules of safety
- find enjoyment in participating in physical activities

Social and Emotional Development

Learning is a central part of the concept of self. No learning occurs that does not involve feelings, and what is learned affects a child's concept of self. It is the role of the teacher to provide a climate in which cooperation is practiced, and one that is happy, realistic, interesting and friendly where each child can:

- learn from the group
- share and take turns
- practice politeness and thoughtfulness
- respect the rights and property of others
- feel a sense of belonging
- accept guidance and authority
- experience joy and satisfaction from self-expression and success
- obtain a sense of affection, approval, independence and self-respect

Creative Expression

The kindergarten child needs many ways to express personal thoughts and feelings. As verbal expression develops so must expression through art, music, dance/movement, creative dramatics and literature. The children will have opportunities to:

- explore body movement through music
- use their voices in singing
- learn about various instruments
- create music
- explore different art media – paint, clay, crayons, etc.
- express themselves creatively
- learn about famous artists
- understand the world about them through creative dramatics; role play, puppets and pantomime

Important Things To Know

Entrance Requirements

- **A child entering kindergarten must be five (5) years old on or before August 31.**
- A copy of the child's Birth Certificate (or other Proof of Age and Legal Name) and two proofs of Mecklenburg County residency must be taken to the school in order to register the child. Please check Student Placement on the CMS website for details.
- **Health Assessment:** In compliance with NC law, all students entering NC public schools for the first time must present a completed NC Health Assessment Transmittal Form on or before the first day of school.
- The following basic immunizations are required by state law before the first day of school entry:
  - **DTP** – 5 doses
  - **Polio** – 4 or more doses (the last must be on or after the 4th birthday).
  - **MMR** – two doses
  - **Hepatitis B** – 3 doses
  - **Hib** – 1 to 4 doses (Note: Hib is not required to enter school after the age of 5 yrs.)
  - **Varicella** – 2 doses

All students are required to present certification of immunizations on or before the first day of school. If not in compliance with the law on the first day of school, families will be given 30 calendar days to provide proof of the immunization and health assessment requirements. After 30 days, students will be excluded from school.

Health Care

The Coordinated School Health Program collaborates with the Mecklenburg County Health Department's School Health Program to provide a safe and healthy learning environment with school nurses assigned to all CMS schools. School nurses provide preventative education, first aid, emergency

care, assessment, referrals, and management of acute and chronic health problems. Proper documentation from a medical provider is required to administer medications to students. If your child has special health or dietary needs, please contact your school office prior to the start of school.

To keep students healthy and ready to learn, school nurses work with the school to:

- Reduce or eliminate health problems, including those that are acute and chronic, so that children do not lose time in class.
- Identify suspected health problems such as poor vision, hearing, nutritional and emotional concerns.
- Contact parents about possible health problems and help them find proper resources for care.
- Support school staff in safe administration of medications in school.
- Ensure compliance with immunizations and physical exams required for school entry and attendance.

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General

- **Breakfast** – is offered daily in all schools before the start of the school day at no charge to students.
- **Lunch** – a variety of nutritious choices are provided in the school cafeteria each day. Lunch includes meat/meat substitute, vegetables/fruit, grain and milk. Children who bring lunches from home can buy milk in the cafeteria.
- **School hours** – The opening and closing hours vary from school to school. Please consult the CMS or school website.
- **Bus Schedules** – Bus routes and schedules will be determined before the beginning of school. Each parent will receive this information right before school begins.
- **Progress Reports** – Parent-Teacher conferences are held after the first nine weeks of school. Parents will receive individual progress reports periodically during the year.

5 Parent Pointers

To Help Your Child Be Successful At School

1. Read to your child **every** day. Reading to children is the most important thing parents do to help their children become good readers.
2. Establish family routines: frequent meals together at the table and a consistent bedtime on school nights.
3. Establish a few rules at home and see that your child follows them.
4. Provide many different experiences for your child to visit the library, parks, festivals, museums, post office, airport and other interesting places.
5. Limit screen time.

Parents and Teachers Together

Parent involvement is a very important part of a successful school program. The schools welcome the involvement and interest of parents in the education of their children. You can become involved by:

- visiting and/or volunteering to help in the classrooms (Please check in using the Lobby Guard system in the school's office.)
- providing materials for hands-on activities (examples: cooking ingredients, recycled materials such as shoeboxes and plastic tubs)
- serving as a resource for school projects
- becoming a member of the PTA and attending meetings on a regular basis
- always checking first with the school (teacher, principal) about any concerns you have regarding your child

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Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

In compliance with federal law, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools administers all education programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination against any person on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age or disability.