

BROWN COUNTY SCHOOLS

Preschool Program Handbook



**Helmsburg Elementary
Sprunica Elementary
Van Buren Elementary**



Welcome to the Brown County Schools Preschool Program!

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of your child's early childhood education. This preschool handbook is designed to answer many of the questions you may have about our program. Here are some highlights:

- ❖ Each of our three elementary schools are **Paths to Quality Level 3** programs and are home to two preschool classrooms staffed with a 1/10 ratio.
- ❖ Our preschool teachers are required to hold a Child Development Certificate (CDA) credential within their first year of employment.
- ❖ Our building principals serve as Preschool Directors and work together to assure a quality early learning experience is accessible to ALL children.
- ❖ Tuition is charged by the session with a minimum of three sessions per week recommended for each child.
- ❖ Families provide transportation to and from preschool.
- ❖ Brown County Preschools accept CCDF vouchers and are eligible to take On My Way Pre-K vouchers. If you need information about these state programs, we are here to help!
- ❖ Brown County Community Foundation Preschool Scholarships may be available to families living in Brown County who do not qualify for Indiana's On My Way Pre-K program, but demonstrate financial need. Students awarded a BCCF scholarship must attend four sessions per week.
- ❖ Students eligible for preschool under IDEA Part B (special education law) pay no tuition and round-trip transportation is provided. In addition to a preschool teacher they interact with a licensed special education staff.



About Our Program

Brown County Schools offers a fully inclusive Preschool Program for children 3 to 5 years of age. We understand that a child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development is best nurtured among caring adults and peers within an environment that extends curiosity and enriches learning. Our program is child-centered while providing the structure needed for children to feel safe within predictable routines. We respect that each child is uniquely individual and eagerly watch for and celebrate learning milestones as a natural outcome of play and guided learning activities.

We want your child to enjoy coming to preschool! We use positive classroom practices as the foundation for building a joyful community of learners. Our teachers and support staff take every opportunity to honor creativity and wonder as primary means for cultivating self-confidence and self-expression. Conversation, observation and patient listening are the tools used by our entire Preschool team to develop the relationships children depend on as they work through challenges and share their accomplishments.

We know that parents, grandparents, and other caregivers rely on our communication. We promise to do our personal best to keep you informed of all special events, school celebrations, upcoming topics related to curriculum and other important information through our weekly newsletter.

About Our Curriculum

Our preschool curriculum is based on the updated *Indiana Early Learning Foundations*. Throughout the day, children move through a series of specially designed learning centers where they may participate at their own personal level of interest and ability. The curriculum focuses on learning basic concepts and skills through hands-on experiences and activities. Some centers are designed to develop large and small motor skills while others are more academically oriented. By using the *Indiana Early Learning Foundations* as our guide, we provide a comprehensive approach to addressing development of the whole child.

We currently use [The Creative Curriculum for Preschool](#). Lessons are based on the Indiana Early Learning Foundations and The Creative Curriculum's Progressions of Development and Learning. The progressions show widely held expectations of learning and development for different age-groups. The progressions show the usual sequence of development, so teachers can assess each child accurately and use the information to plan instruction. Teachers make decisions each day as they observe children and respond in appropriate ways. The observations require teachers to think about each child and consider how best to provide support. Specific areas of learning for children include Social Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Studies, and The Arts.

The teachers use six Teaching Guides throughout the year to help introduce content in a cohesive, sequential manner. Children enjoy the featured **studies** that begin with exploring children's questions through a series of **investigations** which are structured by days. The Creative Curriculum *for Preschool* is connects theory and research, how children develop and learn, designing an environment for learning, what children need to learn, caring and teaching practices, and the value of partnering with families.

Enrollment Process

Children must be 3 years of age to attend the preschool program. Enrollment is rolling, so children are welcome to enroll and attend on or after their third birthday at any time during the school year. A completed BCS Preschool – Grade 6 Enrollment Packet is required for all students. The packet must be received by school office personnel from the child's home school (School of Legal Settlement). Evidence that all immunizations are up to date and a copy of the child's birth certificate must be presented with the completed enrollment packet. A non-refundable \$25.00 Certification Maintenance Fee is collected at the time of enrollment form ALL families including those on scholarship. On My Way PreK families are not required to pay the enrollment fee.

In addition, families who plan to transition from the First Steps Program should communicate their decision to enroll their child in the Brown County Schools Preschool Program at their 30 month transition meeting. A Case Conference will be held prior to the child's third birthday to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Families are contacted by the school their child will attend to schedule a Case Conference date and time. *(Refer to the BCS Preschool Inclusion Policy)*

Toileting Requirement

General education preschoolers must be completely toilet-trained and be capable of using the bathroom independently **at the time of enrollment**. Preschoolers with developmental disabilities and a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) do not need to meet this requirement.

Confidentiality Commitment to Families

Confidentiality plays a vital role in promoting respect for every individual and fostering a strong community. Communications among staff and parents about children should be kept confidential at all times. We believe that conversations about a child, their behavior, or an incident should be conducted in private, away from the child and other members of the school community. If a parent has a question or concern, we suggest first contacting the child's teacher via email or in person to arrange a time for productive discussion. Our goal is for communication between staff, parents, directors and the program coordinator to be open and accessible.

Parents should expect that all children are cared for in a safe, supportive, respectful, and trusting environment. Behavior management will be fair, equal, and respectful of the individual development of all children. Educational experiences will be engaging and children have plenty of choice-time and play-time.

Attendance & Tuition Fees

Regular attendance in preschool is highly encouraged. However, if your child must miss a day due to illness or for any other reason, please contact the school office to report the absence. Children must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to preschool. Our Preschool Program follows the Brown County Schools calendar. Children must participate in at least 2 full days per week but may attend up to 5 full days. **A non-refundable \$25.00 Preschool Enrollment Fee is due upon enrollment for all children.** (On My Way PreK families are not required to pay the enrollment fee.)

The fee per day (6 hours) is \$27.00. **Fees are charged each day regardless of attendance.** In other words, if a child is enrolled for 2 days per week and does not attend either day for any reason (including illness) the family is still charged \$27.00 per day. Preschool days may not be switched or made up during the week if missed for any reason. Unless otherwise arranged with front office, **preschool tuition is due weekly.**

PLEASE NOTE: If you wish to add a day during the year, you must give 48 hours written notice using the *Brown County Schools Change of Program* form. ***(Refer to Preschool Tuition Information Sheet)***

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Participants

Families using CCDF vouchers to pay for preschool tuition are required to slide their participation card every time they enter or leave the program in addition to signing in and out. Under NO circumstances may a staff member do this on behalf of a parent/guardian. We are happy to assist, but we are not permitted to keep a card, copy a card, or copy a card number or its pin.

Transportation/Release Policy

Parents of General Education Preschoolers are 100% responsible for providing transportation to and from preschool for their child. **The policy for release/special pick-up is as follows:**

- ❖ Please inform the school officer with a note or phone call if someone other than those you have originally authorized will be picking up your child (a photo I.D. is required).
- ❖ Children can only be released to parents and adults whose names are designated in the BCS Preschool – Grade 6 Enrollment Packet. Be prepared to show proof of identification upon request.
- ❖ Any additions to the authorized list must be made in person in the school office.
- ❖ For safety reasons, we are unable to release a child to another minor.
- ❖ Legally, we cannot keep a parent from picking up his/her child from preschool without having court order documentation in the school's main office.

Special Education Preschoolers who attend a HALF-DAY session per their Individual Education Plan (IEP) may receive transportation to and from school MONDAY-THURSDAY. Preschool special transportation buses do not run on FRIDAYS. Special Education Preschoolers who attend preschool beyond the frequency of services stated in their IEP, must be transported by the family on those additional participation days.

Arrival/Dismissal

Please arrive promptly for preschool! We begin to engage in activities as soon as school starts!

The preschool staff will meet the buses when they arrive. If you need to utilize Before School Care the fee is \$2.00.

If you arrive at school after the preschool staff has returned to the classroom, please sign in at the office and walk your child to the classroom. The preschool staff will meet parents and bus drivers at 11:00 for the morning dismissal. Parents may wait outside the school or in the lobby. If you need to utilize After School Care, which runs from 3:15-6:00pm, **an additional fee** will be charged.

School Entry and Security

All schools are equipped with a video entry system enabling the school building to be locked during the school day. Each school varies on the particular location of the video equipment. You or someone on the authorized pick-up list may be required to ring the video monitor to be keyed in to the building. If you have any questions about this process be sure to ask the office staff or school principal/director.

Home Connections (Family Involvement)

Weekly activities may be sent home that involve you and your child. These activities will vary and help you see what your child is learning at preschool. These activities are intended to be fun and help your child connect ***you*** with their preschool classroom.

A communication folder will be sent home in your child's book-bag daily. Here you will find important information about what's going on at school, activities your child has completed at school and papers that may need a signature and returned to school. **Please check book bags/folders every night.** Preschool parents will receive weekly Newsletters and are invited to attend monthly PTO meetings. Preschool parents may donate items or volunteer to help with class events as well as accompany their child on field trips.

Visitors and Program Observation

Brown County Schools welcomes volunteers and classroom visitors. A criminal history check is required and confidentiality agreements may be required as appropriate.

Supplies

Every child must have a complete change of clothing at all times, including socks and underwear. If your child has changed clothing during the day, please take home the soiled items and replace them the next day. All clothing items must be labeled with the child's full name. **A general supply list will be provided.**

Lost and Found

Please mark all personal items with your child's name. We will make every attempt to locate and return lost items. This task is much easier if your child's name is on the items. We cannot be responsible for any personal items that your child may bring to school. Please check the lost and found at school.

Snacks

Your child will need to bring in a healthy snack **daily**. If he/she attends a half-day session, one healthy snack will be needed daily. If your child attends a FULL day session, two healthy snacks will be needed daily.

Show and Tell

Please check your child's newsletter to see when Show and Tell is scheduled. Your child may bring one toy to share with his/her class. Please do not allow your child to bring items on other days. Violent toys, toy guns and swords may not be brought to school. All show and tell items must fit in our child's book bag.

Nap/Rest Time

Preschool students will have the opportunity for a **30-60 minute rest time** each day. During this time, students will be provided a clean mat or cot to lie on. Calming rest music or a video may be played during this time. Students may sleep or just rest on their mat or cot with a quiet activity.

Birthday Parties

Children are allowed to bring in snacks to celebrate their birthdays. If your child brings a treat, only store-bought foods can be served, and the food provided must be preceded by a completed list of ingredients and food label notifications. Healthy treats are encouraged.

Illness

Colds, flu, and other contagious diseases seem to occur frequently and spread easily among preschool and toddler children. To help protect your own child's health and to minimize the possibility of contagion at school, please keep your child home if you observe any of the following symptoms:

- ❖ Nasal discharge that is green or yellow
- ❖ Complaints of ear pain
- ❖ Severe sore throat
- ❖ Eyes that are pink, burning or itching or producing discharge
- ❖ Diarrhea or vomiting
- ❖ Fever or chills
- ❖ Cough
- ❖ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Muscle or body aches
- ❖ Headache
- ❖ New loss of taste or smell

If these symptoms of possibly contagious conditions or other conditions deemed contagious are observed in your child during the day, you will be called to come pick up your child immediately.

When your child has a fever, please keep him/her at home until their temperature returns to normal and he/she stays fever free for 24 hours without Tylenol or ibuprofen. Children also must be free from diarrhea and vomiting for 24 hours prior to returning to preschool. If there are any lingering signs of illness, i.e. glass/watery eyes, listless, and/or drowsiness, etc., please keep your child home an additional day. This will help to ensure that the illness has actually passed and that your child will be well enough to resume school activities. Please call the main office if your child will be absent.

Medications

As a service to our parents, the office staff will administer medication prescribed by your physician. Medication must be in the original container with the child's name on the label, as well as the prescription number, name of medication, dosage, and expiration dates. A permission to administer medication form can be found in the office and it must accompany the medication.

Field Trips

Parents are encouraged to attend field trips with their child. Parents who wish to ride the bus and/or chaperone other students on the trip must have a full certified background check on file in the main

office. Background checks will need to be done yearly. If parents do not wish to complete the background check and would still like to attend the field trip with their child, they may follow and meet the bus at the field trip location. These parents will not be responsible for the supervision of any child except their own.

Discipline Practices

Use of Positive Measures to Produce Acceptable Behavior

In order to maintain a happy, healthy, disciplined environment, the children are taught the importance of safety, care of property, good habits, positive conduct, consideration, and respect for others. Constructive methods of discipline are used to maintain group control and handle individual behavior. Our child guidance practices are based in positive discipline. They are intended to teach age-appropriate self-regulation skills known to be foundational for learning and socializing.

Use of Constructive Measures to Discourage Unacceptable Behavior

When a child exhibits unacceptable behavior or attitudes, he/she is instructed as to what is wrong and then directed to a positive alternative approach/behavior. Along with these new attitudes and behaviors, the child is guided in the direction of self-discipline by encouraging him/her to make as many decisions as possible within limits. **The limits are as follows:**

- ❖ If a child hurts another child, he/she and the other child are respectfully separated. Each child is asked to explain what happened (define the problem). After each child has verbally given information, they are asked to help solve the problem, talk to each other, reconcile with one another and are redirected to another activity.
- ❖ If a child is disruptive, he/she will be respectfully asked to stop the behavior. If the child persists to the point of disruption again, he/she is reminded of his/her behavior and how it affects others. If the disruption continues, and the child willfully refuses to yield to instruction, he/she may be briefly separated from the other children. After a calming down period of 2 to 5 minutes, he/she will be invited to rejoin the class.
- ❖ If a child frequently struggles to get along with others and engage in class activities, the parents will be asked to attend a conference to discuss how we can best meet the needs of the child.

Policy for 2 Hour Delay/Early Dismissal

In the event of bad weather that leads to school closings and school delays, the following is the 2 hour delay policy for preschool students:

- ❖ NO AM preschool for students who attend AM only. There will be NO AM special transportation
- ❖ Students who attend ALL DAY and are transported by their parents may attend beginning at 9:50am.

- ❖ Any student who rides the bus to school in the morning and is then picked up by the parent in the afternoon, the parent will need to bring the child to school instead.
- ❖ Fees will remain the same students.
- ❖ In the case of an early dismissal parents will be contacted through Parent Square.

Termination of Enrollment

In very rare circumstances, it may be necessary for BCS administration to pause a child's attendance for a period of time. **Every effort will be made to work with families to correct a problematic situation before such a determination is made.** A "no cost" pause in attendance may be the result of the following:

- ❖ Non-payment of Tuition Fees without payment arrangements in place.
- ❖ An unaddressed pattern of misconduct that brings harm to other children, staff, or property.
- ❖ Failure to comply with the program's health and safety guidelines required by the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA).

5 Areas of School Readiness

Brown County Preschools measure and address readiness for school across five distinct but connected areas:

1. Physical Well-Being and Motor Development.

- a. Children's physical development (e.g. growth patterns of height and weight)
- b. Health status (the ability to see and hear)
- c. Physical abilities (e.g. ability to move to get needs met, assisted or unassisted)
- d. Proper nutrition and rest have a strong impact on readiness to learn, providing children with the energy and mobility to explore their environment and increase their ability to concentrate.
- e. Early identification of needs and provision of intervention services are critical for children with disabilities.

2. Social and Emotional Development.

- a. Children's knowledge of their own feelings and those of others
- b. The ability to develop positive relationships
- c. An interest in and demonstration of interpersonal skills needed to maintain positive relationships with adults and peers
- d. The capability of engaging and cooperating within a group
- e. The ability to demonstrate the skills needed to get along with peers (e.g. managing conflicts in a positive way)
- f. Highlights of this domain serve as a foundation for later school success and meaningful life experiences as an adult and consist of: developing and maintaining friendships, appreciating differences, solving conflicts, and functioning effectively in groups.

3. Approaches to Learning.

- a. Curiosity
- b. Enjoyment of learning
- c. Confidence
- d. Creativity
- e. Attention to task
- f. Reflection
- g. Interests and attitudes

4. Language Development.

- a. Expressive (e.g. expressive speech that is understood or use of a nonverbal system of communication)
- b. Understanding skills to effectively interact with others
- c. Early literacy skills are a part of language development (e.g. an awareness of print, an understanding that writing has a purpose).
- d. Language development and early literacy skills are correlated to how

effectively children can communicate their needs, interact socially with others, and describe events, thoughts, and feelings.

5. Cognition and General Knowledge.

- a. Basic knowledge of concepts and the workings of the environment in which the child participates (e.g. knows his/her own name, understanding basic science concepts)
- b. Cognitive competencies like early mathematical skills (e.g. number sense, discriminating shapes and colors, simple patterns, size, location, and time)
- c. Basic problem-solving skills (e.g. acknowledging similarities and differences, identifying solutions, and increasing attention and focus to challenging tasks.)
- d. A child's innate sense of curiosity and the ability to acquire, organize, and use information in increasingly complex ways are indicative of how the child acquires new knowledge and learns about the impact he/she has on others and the environment.

Although these areas are separate and distinct, there is constant overlap of skill acquisition in early childhood development. Skills in one domain are reinforced as skills are gained in another domain, (e.g. increase of communication skills builds confidence and positive self-image). Kindergarten teachers support all five domains of child development.

Children development occurs at varying rates, and as such we should not expect all children to reach a common "standard" of readiness. Children come from different cultures, with unique life experiences, and a range of ability levels. Therefore, it is anticipated that children may demonstrate competencies in individual ways and should be expected to show different patterns of development.

The concept of "readiness" includes much more than children's readiness to learn kindergarten standards. As defined by the National Education Goals Panel, the School Readiness Indicators Initiative (<http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/99rpt.pdf>), and others, "readiness" includes ready children, ready families, ready communities, ready early care and education, and ready schools. Readiness at every level is necessary so that all children will experience success.

It is the responsibility of schools to meet the needs of children as they enter school and to provide whatever services are needed to help each child reach his or her fullest potential.

Indiana has developed the Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5. The Foundations are based on the latest national research and findings for all content areas and domains. By outlining specific skills and concepts and giving examples of instructional strategies, these foundations will support teachers, parents, and caregivers as they develop appropriate experiences for young children to help ensure success in kindergarten.

A copy of the Indiana Foundations can be viewed at:

<https://www.in.gov/doe/students/indiana-academic-standards/early-learning/>