

# WELCOME

Welcome to the Robert L. Craig School Early Childhood Program! We are happy to have you as part of our school community. If at any time you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to contact your child's teacher or the Master Teacher at (201)641-5833 Ext. 117.

This handbook explains policies, procedures, and expectations of the families participating in the Early Childhood Program\*. Keep it for future reference, as it contains information that may be helpful throughout the year. We hope your child will have a happy and rewarding learning experience.

This is a free, full day preschool program open to Moonachie resident children, ages 3 and 4.

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD  
ROBERT L. CRAIG SCHOOL  
20 WEST PARK STREET  
MOONACHIE, NJ 07074  
(201)641-5833 Ext. 117

\*CDC guidance may replace school procedures as we continue to navigate Covid 19 protocols to ensure the safety of students and staff.

We thank you for your flexibility.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Early Childhood's mission is to provide an all-inclusive, high quality preschool education for Preschool and Kindergarten children who reside in Moonachie. We believe early childhood is a crucial time in development that requires positive experiences from which children can develop and grow. We will:

- ❖ Provide a safe and nurturing environment where children will play, explore, experiment, and develop a lifelong joy for learning
- ❖ Utilize developmentally appropriate practice and proven research to guide instruction
- ❖ Implement a research-based curriculum with an aligned assessment system
- ❖ Intentionally plan lessons, activities, and experiences that promote high expectations, exceed standards, and build a strong academic and social-emotional foundation
- ❖ Promote acceptance and understanding of our unique and special attributes
- ❖ Provide an inclusive program with appropriate supports and individualized plans as needed for children with special needs or dual language learners
- ❖ Develop creative thinkers and problem solvers who make good choices and develop positive self-esteem
- ❖ Collaborate and partner with families, health service providers, and community stakeholders
- ❖ Provide ongoing, comprehensive professional development to early childhood professionals who educate and support our children and families.

## PROGRAM GOALS AND PHILOSOPHIES

- ❖ Our early childhood program provides students with a variety of developmentally appropriate activities that are fully integrated and that facilitate development in all four domains: social, emotional, physical, and cognitive, leading to future success in school.
- ❖ Effective early childhood education recognizes and respects the cultural and religious diversity of all families as well as the importance between a home school connection and family involvement.
- ❖ Our program follows state mandates, Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines and *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations; Standards of Quality* as they relate to our district's specific needs and circumstances providing all district children with a high quality education.
- ❖ Grow NJ Kids, New Jersey's Quality Rating Improvement System, is New Jersey's program to raise the quality of child care and early learning across the state. For child care and early learning programs, it provides resources that help raise their quality and continuously improve their programs. For parents, it provides information on selecting a quality provider to help them make the most of their child's early learning opportunities.

## SCHOOL PROCEDURES

The preschool program begins at 8:50 a.m. and ends at 3:05 p.m.

On early dismissal days school ends at 1:00 p.m.

- ❖ Arrival: **All students are expected at school by 8:50 a.m.** If you arrive before 8:45 a.m., please bring your child to the last entrance of the building (closest to the Gym). If you arrive after 8:45 a.m., please enter through the main entrance of the school. A staff member will escort your child to his or her classroom.
- ❖ Dismissal: Preschool students will be dismissed from their classroom using the first entrance of the building (closest to the preschool classrooms). Please wait outside this entrance and your child will be brought to you. Please be prompt, as it often upsets children when others are picked up and they are left waiting. Children may only be picked up by adults who are listed on the enrollment form. If someone other than a designated person will be picking up your child, you must notify the teacher in writing. If that is not possible, call the school secretary and let her know who will be picking up your child. They may be asked to show identification.
- ❖ Emergency Closing: In the event that school will be closed due to inclement weather, the phone messaging system will be activated and families will receive a notification phone call at the phone number of record. Make sure the school has your most recent phone number. Families may also check the District website, [www.moonachieschool.org](http://www.moonachieschool.org).
- ❖ Delayed Opening: In the event of a delayed opening due to inclement weather, school will begin at 9:30 a.m.
- ❖ Home Visits: Teacher home visits have recently been linked to low school truancy rates and better reading outcomes. Other benefits include improved home-school connections, easier transitions to preschool, and greater collaboration between teachers and parents/guardians. Our program offers home visits to families on a voluntary basis. To learn more about this program, please call the preschool office (201)641-5833 Ext. 117.

## CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

- ❖ **Communication:** Open communication between our preschool families and teachers is a priority to ensure the best possible school experience for your child. In the preschool program, we communicate with families regularly through notes, email, messaging and phone calls. Please be sure to check your child's backpack each night for notes, permission slips and other written communication. Parents/Guardians may set up a time to discuss any questions or concerns about their child, in addition to the scheduled November parent-teacher conference.
- ❖ **Back Packs:** The children will have several items to carry home each day and will need a standard size back pack to handle all of their belongings. Please label your child's back pack.
- ❖ **Lunch:** The students will be eating lunch in the classroom each day. Students may receive a school lunch or bring lunch from home. Please refer to the school website for menu choices.
- ❖ **Rest Time:** Each full day of school there will be a resting period after lunch for approximately one hour. A mat will be provided for your child. Your child will need a crib sheet and a small blanket. Please send these items in a bag marked with your child's name. Bedding will be sent home at the end of each week to be washed. Return the items to school on the following Monday.
- ❖ **Outdoor Time:** All preschool classes go outside for approximately 45 minutes per day when the temperature/wind chill is above freezing and it is not raining. Please plan accordingly and be sure your child is dressed for the weather with coats, hats, and gloves as needed. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to have their children wear protective footwear, such as sneakers, each day to prevent injury during outdoor play.
- ❖ **Snack Policy:** Children should bring a snack every day. Healthy snacks help children learn! The USDA Dietary Guidelines help schools and families determine healthy food choices. In our efforts to provide a quality program that promotes good health and nutrition, we have implemented a snack policy. Our snack policy conforms with the recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics of a 5 step approach to selecting food for preschool aged children. Accommodations will be made for children with food allergies.
  1. Select a mix of foods from the five food groups: vegetables, fruits, grains, low-fat dairy and quality protein sources, including lean meats, fish, nuts, seeds and eggs.
  2. Offer a variety of food experiences.
  3. Avoid highly processed food.
  4. Use only small amounts of sugar, salt, fat and oil with nutritious food to enhance enjoyment and consumption.
  5. Offer appropriate serving sizes.

Our approved snack list is as follows:

Approved Beverages:

- ✓ Milk (low fat or nonfat)
- ✓ Fruit or vegetable juice (100% juice)
- ✓ Water

Approved snack food items:

- ✓ All fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Whole grain or enriched cereals/crackers
- ✓ Cheese (string, cubes, cottage cheese)
- ✓ Snack cracker packages (cheese on wheat, peanut butter crackers)
- ✓ Pretzels
- ✓ Yogurt
- ✓ Hard boiled eggs

- ❖ Extra Clothes: Please send in an extra set of clothing (including socks and underwear) in a gallon size zip-lock bag with your child's name in case of accidents or spills. If an accident occurs, your child will be changed and the soiled or wet clothing will be sent home in a plastic bag. Make sure to send in a new set of clothing the following day.
- ❖ Labeling: It is extremely important that you label all of your child's belongings. Sometimes children do not recognize their own items, which can make it challenging in the beginning of the year to determine which items belong to each child. Please label the following items before sending them into school with a permanent (Sharpie type) marker or sewn in label:

Jackets	Extra Clothing	Hats	Blankets
Lunch Box	Back Pack	Sheets	

Be sure to always label envelopes containing money or notes to the teacher with your child's full name and teacher.

- ❖ Birthdays: Birthdays are important to the children. Please talk to your child's teacher about any special treats you would like to send in prior to his/her birthday.
- ❖ Field Trips: Your child may take field trips during the school year. Permission slips and trip dates will be sent out in advance. We encourage parents/guardians to attend when possible to ensure the safety of the children and to strengthen the home-school connection. We may limit the number of chaperones allowed on a trip. No siblings may attend a field trip. Certain field trips may require a chaperone in order for your child to attend.
- ❖ Toys: Toys from home are discouraged unless requested by your child's teacher.

## CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

Our curriculum and assessment instruments are approved by the Moonachie Board of Education and are aligned with the *New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards*.

- ❖ Preschool classrooms utilize *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*.
  - ✓ *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* is based on the most current research about preschool child development and learning.
  - ✓ Teaching Strategies GOLD is the Assessment System which is aligned to the *New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards*.
  - ✓ The curriculum supports social-emotional, cognitive, physical and language development as well as learning in the following content areas: literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies and the arts.
  - ✓ Content is presented through the use of project-based studies and investigations, which support children's natural curiosity while encouraging learning. Project-based studies are a great means for you to become involved in your child's education; just ask your child's teacher how you can support various classroom studies to include: trees, clothing, recycling, and more...
  - ✓ Visit [www.teachingstrategies.com](http://www.teachingstrategies.com) for more information about *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*.
  
- ❖ Teachers administer a research-based, developmental Early Screening Inventory (ESI) to each child after the first six weeks of school. In addition, teachers maintain anecdotal records and other on-going documentation to evaluate each child's progress throughout the year.
  
- ❖ Parent/Guardian/Teacher conferences are scheduled in November and all parents/guardians are encouraged to attend at this time. If you would like to discuss your child's progress at any other time, contact the school office or your child's teacher to schedule a meeting. We will do our best to accommodate your schedule.

## TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

Transition is the process of preparing preschool students who will be 5 by October 1<sup>st</sup> to be ready to enter Kindergarten.

- ❖ Preschool and Kindergarten teachers meet regularly to discuss the curriculum.
- ❖ Families are encouraged to attend workshops such as *Getting Ready for Kindergarten* to become familiar with the transition process, have their questions answered by a Kindergarten teacher, and be better equipped to respond to developmental milestones.

## Attendance Policy

Developing good attendance habits now sets a precedent for later school years. Make every effort to have your child arrive on time every day that he or she is healthy. Children who are tardy or absent miss out on important activities and have their routines disrupted. Communication with school staff is essential to insure unique situations are addressed.

- ❖ A written excuse from the parent or doctor is required for the record and must be submitted upon your child's return to school. For ten or more unexcused absences, the school must make a referral to the court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts.
  - An "unexcused" absence is designated by the school for the following reasons:
    - Family travel
    - Recreational activities
  - The only excused absences are for:
    - A student's illness
    - A student's uncoverable and/or uncovered weeping skin lesion
    - A death or critical illness in the student's immediately family
    - Quarantine
    - Observance of the student's religion on a day approved for that purpose by the State Board of Education
    - A student's required attendance in court
    - Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day
- ❖ The Moonachie School District conducts a required Absence Verification Program. Our intent is to ensure the safety and well-being of our children by verifying that the child you sent to school arrives safely. You are required to notify our Attendance Officer at (201)641-5833, Ext. 120 by 8:30 a.m. whenever your child will be absent due to illness or for any other reason. A voice mail is provided for your around-the-clock convenience.
- ❖ The attendance officer will call parents and when necessary, conduct a home visit if the school is not notified regarding a student absence.
- ❖ A child who has been absent is required to present a written note of explanation, signed by a parent or legal guardian, upon returning to school.

❖ Excessive absenteeism:

- If an enrolled child is absent without excuse for more than 3 consecutive days, the district will make every effort to contact the family to find out why the child has been absent and to find out what assistance is needed in getting the child to school.
- After 3 consecutive days and failed attempts to contact the family, the attendance officer and/or CPIS will inform the Superintendent/Principal of the matter.
- A home visit will then be planned and conducted. During the home visit, the attendance officer, social worker, and/or CPIS will assess if the family is in crisis or has a need for social services support.
- Follow up home visits and/or face to face contact with the family will be on-going throughout the remainder of the school year and involve the coordinated efforts of the classroom teacher, attendance officer, social worker, CPIS, and Superintendent/Principal.
- If attempts to reach the family and child are unsuccessful after 3 days, the district will continue with efforts to contact the family. If a child's welfare is in question, the Department of Children and Families and/or law enforcement will be contacted.

- ❖ Late Arrival to School: School starts promptly at 8:50 a.m. All students are expected at this time. Excessive late arrivals will result in a meeting with the Master Teacher to discuss how we may help to facilitate a timely arrival to school.



## Preschool Health and Wellness

All preschool students must have proof of a current physical examination and proof of immunizations prior to the first day of school. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school nurse at (201)641-5833, Ext. 106.

Assistance is provided to students who become ill or injured during the school day. In case of an emergency, the parent/guardian will be notified immediately. No less than two emergency contacts with working phone numbers should be provided and kept current throughout the school year.

- ❖ Influenza (Flu) Vaccine Requirement: Per NJ State Law N.J.A.C.8:57-4.2 all students under the age of five must receive a flu vaccine between September 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> each year. Students who have not received the vaccine will be excluded from the program effective January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- ❖ In order to protect the health of all pupils, we ask that a child be kept at home for observation if he shows any of the following symptoms: abnormal temperatures; running nose; cough; sneezing or other signs of the common cold; rashes; peeling or sores on the skin; sore throat or earaches; swollen glands; vomiting or nausea; fevers or chills; eye infection; head lice (your child must be checked by the school nurse before returning to school). It is advisable to call the school nurse and report any illness that makes it necessary for a child to remain at home. In the case of a child having a contagious disease, the other children in school who may have had contact with him/her may be observed more closely. Under state health regulations, pupils with the noted diseases should be kept home for the number of days specified:
  - Chickenpox - 7 days
  - Mumps - 7 days
  - German Measles - 4 days
  - Measles - 10 days
  - Influenza (the flu) - 7 days
  - Fever - allow your child to have a normal temperature for 24 hours before returning to school.
- ❖ Students who have flu-like symptoms (fever greater than 100 degrees F, cough, headache, body aches, sore throat, lack of appetite, fatigue and sometimes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea), SHOULD STAY HOME FROM SCHOOL. Please follow up with your child's doctor.
- ❖ If your child was sent home for vomiting, be sure your child rests and is able to keep down regular food for 24 hours before returning to school. Your child should not return to school the next day.
- ❖ If your child vomits in the evening or during the night, they should not attend school the next morning.

- ❖ Take your child's temperature. A normal temperature is less than 100 degrees. If your child has a fever in the evening, he/she should stay home the next day. A child's temperature will always be lower in the morning. The fever may return later that day. Keep your child at home until his/her temperature is below 100 degrees for 24 hours. Sending your child to school with a fever may put other students at risk.
- ❖ If your child has a cough or sore throat for more than 3 days, go to the doctor. Follow your doctor's instructions.
- ❖ Please notify the school nurse if your child has strep throat, chicken pox, head lice or any other contagious disease.
- ❖ If your child is injured, please get a doctor's note for school regarding returning to school and participation in outdoor activities.
- ❖ A rash may be a sign of a contagious illness. If your child has a rash, do not send him/her to school. Contact your doctor. A doctor's note will be needed to reenter school.
- ❖ Medication:
  - Staff members are prohibited from the administration of medication to students. When a child requires medication his/her parents are responsible for its administration and may come to school to do so, or the parents may obtain written orders from the family physician authorizing the school nurse to give medication on a regular basis. The school nurse will keep all medical records up to date.
  - Medication prescribed by the doctor must be brought to school by an adult in its original pharmacy container. Have the pharmacist give you a second labeled bottle when you have the prescription filled. The label must contain the child's name, medication name, doctor's name and directions before it will be accepted. A doctor's note directing it to be given at school with diagnosis and length of time to be given must be included.
  - Cough syrups, cold pills, Tylenol, Advil, and cough drops should not be taken at school.
  - Students are not permitted to take medication during the school day or on school property, unless under observation of the school nurse.
  - Some children with life threatening illnesses, who use inhalers, may carry them at school. Keep in mind that forms must be completed by the doctor and parent before students may carry an inhaler.
- ❖ Vision screening: All preschool students will receive an annual vision screening. Results from the vision screening will be reported to parents/guardians. If you do not want your child to participate in the vision screening, please inform the school nurse in writing.

- ❖ Hearing screening: All preschool students will receive an annual hearing screening performed by the school nurse. Parent/guardians will be contacted with any irregularities. If you do not want your child's hearing screened, please inform the school nurse in writing.
- ❖ Oral health: Daily oral health is important to the health of a child. Children who experience pain due to tooth decay have difficulty concentrating in school. Dental screenings are provided by a professional each year. A permission slip will be sent home when screenings are scheduled. Please return a completed permission slip if you would like your child to participate in this program.
- ❖ Sleep: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 10 to 13 hours of sleep for children ages 3-5. All preschool classes nap for one hour. Not all children sleep during this time. Please communicate with your child's teacher about your child's napping habits. This will help you determine an appropriate bedtime for your child.
- ❖ Lead levels: Due to the complications high lead levels in young children can cause, the New Jersey Department of Health recommends that parents/guardians be informed regarding the lead levels in their children. Speak to your pediatrician about lead level testing.

## Preschool Code of Conduct

We understand that all behaviors at this age, positive and negative, have a function. Children exhibiting inappropriate behaviors are usually trying to escape something (ex. an activity such as circle time) or to obtain something (ex. a toy or attention from a classmate or teacher). It is important to our teaching staff that we determine the reason for a child's behavior so that we can teach an appropriate replacement skill to help the child get his/her desired result.

Our early childhood teachers will take the time to speak with students about their feelings that led to the inappropriate behavior. Preschoolers will be encouraged to use their words to express their feelings and solve their problems. Staff will help students verbalize their feelings and facilitate conflict resolution and problem-solving when necessary.

Preschool staff use a variety of age-appropriate, research-based behavior intervention strategies including:

- ✓ Maintaining realistic expectations of children
- ✓ Providing clear and simple limits
- ✓ Preventive practices
- ✓ Modeling appropriate behaviors
- ✓ Positive redirection
- ✓ Teaching of replacement skills
- ✓ Conflict resolution/problem-solving techniques
- ✓ Providing logical and natural consequences for children's actions
- ✓ Removing children from the situation until individual counseling is possible.

Preschool teaching staff strive to maintain consistent and open communication with families regarding the progress of their students. You may be notified of minor behavioral incidents in the following ways: email, telephone, written communication, or in person. A disciplinary report will be required for more serious incidents. In this case, you may be asked to come in and discuss the incident with our child's teacher and the Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist. The connection between home and school is very important, and children must understand that we are all communicating and working together.

Should a child's behavior become a consistent problem, the parents/guardians will be contacted to schedule a conference. Referral to the Preschool Intervention and Referral Team for further assistance and intervention strategies may be required.

Extreme behavioral situations that continue, despite all efforts, will be referred to the Superintendent/Principal and be handled on a case-by-case basis and may be subject to a Positive Behavior Support Intervention.

## Family and Student Assistance Services

### **YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S 1<sup>ST</sup> TEACHER!!!!**

Research has shown that regular communication between families and teachers are related to positive student outcomes. The following is a list of suggestions to help families ensure a successful preschool learning experience:

- Get to know your teachers!
- Volunteer to assist in classroom activities by reading to the students or chaperoning field trips.
- Attend parent/teacher conferences, local school board meetings, school events and workshops!

### **Your involvement is the KEY to your child's success!!!!**

#### **\*Community and Parent Involvement Specialist:**

- The CPIS works directly with parents to ensure access to community resources and parent supports. There are many opportunities to become involved in your child's education both at home and in school. Please look out for notices sent home about special events.

#### **\*Preschool Intervention and Referral Team:**

- The PIRT assists teachers and families in creating and implementing strategies to help students succeed academically and socially in their classroom environment.

#### **\*Child Study Team:**

- The Child Study Team is made up of a school psychologist, learning consultant, and social worker. The Child Study Team performs tests, determines eligibility, and creates individual education plans (IEP's) for students found eligible for special education services.

#### **\*Preschool Master Teacher:**

- The master teacher is available to provide support and assistance regarding curriculum and program quality for staff, students, and families.

#### **\*Dual Language Learners:**

- The Early Childhood Program is dedicated to providing the best educational program for all students. Children whose first language is not English are encouraged to use their home language to communicate. In addition, students and teachers use gestures, communication devices, sign language, pictures and other developmentally appropriate tools to communicate when needed.

- How are the children identified and supported?
  - ✓ A Home Language Survey is used to help identify children who may need ELL support.
  - ✓ Strategies, activities, and small group lessons are enhanced for comprehension and language acquisition using picture supports, props, acting out, gestures and finger plays.
  - ✓ Our Early Childhood classrooms are equipped with literacy materials that reflect the languages spoken by the children.
  - ✓ District staff provide home language translation and assist with outreach to families as needed.
  - ✓ Parents are encouraged to continue to speak with their child in their home language.
  - ✓ Students are assessed quarterly using research-based objectives in Teaching Strategies GOLD.

\*Early Childhood Education Advisory Council (ECEAC)

- The Early Childhood Education Advisory Council is comprised of school staff, local stakeholders, community members and families who are invested in the education and welfare of preschool children. The Council meets quarterly to discuss and review progress towards full implementation of high-quality preschool programs. **Family members are encouraged to attend!** Please contact the Community and Parent Involvement Specialist at (201)641-5833 Ext. 117 for more information.

Project Child Find

*If a family is concerned that a child, ages 3 through 21, may be developmentally or educationally delayed, contact the Child Study Team at (201)641-5833 Ext.112. The Child Study Team helps families identify available resources and services in the district and in the community. For additional information about early intervention (birth through age 2) call New Jersey Early Intervention System at (888)653-4463.*

## Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB)

On January 5, 2011, Governor Chris Christie signed into law P.L.2010, Chapter 122, an act concerning HIB in school settings that amended various parts of the statutory law. In particular for school policies and procedures, the act amended N.J.S.A.18A:37-13 et seq., which includes the requirements for the prevention and intervention of HIB on and off school grounds, at school-sponsored functions and on school buses. The Moonachie Board of Education has approved a policy in accordance with P.L.2010, Chapter 122. In accordance with the law, Dana Genatt has been appointed Anti-Bullying Coordinator for the Moonachie Public Schools.