

LITTLE ROADRUNNER PRESCHOOL

WELCOME

Dear Parents/Guardians:

By enrolling your child in The Little Roadrunner Preschool program, you have given your child a very precious gift – a warm and loving environment in which to grow and learn! While attending preschool your child will be introduced to a vast amount of fun and effective learning activities that will help your child build self-confidence and positive self-esteem. At the same time, your child will be developing some very important pre-kindergarten social and academic skills.

This handbook is an addition to the Interstate 35 Community School District elementary parent/student handbook. Parents of preschool children are expected to be familiar with the information in both the elementary and preschool handbook. Together these outline a wealth of information parents need regarding the preschool program. It is designed to help your family make a smooth transition to the program by clearly communicating the philosophy, goals, and policies.

The Little Roadrunner teachers and director truly value open communication between the home and school. We understand that no one knows more about your child than you do. Therefore, we consider you as an integral part of the teaching team. You are encouraged to discuss your child's progress or any concerns or questions with the teachers. Since many of our students are bussed, face-to-face communication between parents and teachers may be limited. Because of this, parents are encouraged to send notes or e-mails or call teachers before or after school to discuss any concerns or ideas you may have. We will be using an online assessment tool for evaluating your child on a continuous basis and you will have access to all of this information at all times. Formal conferences will be held in the fall and spring of each year, but additional conferences are welcome throughout the year if you would like to sit and talk to a teacher or the director.

Teachers will send home a daily report highlighting what your child has worked on throughout the day. The preschool has a parent information bulletin board that posts the menu, a summary of the weekly lessons, and other information you may find helpful. Please take time to look over the parent board when you visit.

Thank you for trusting us to teach and nurture your child!

Casey Christensen, Director

Jenny Dickinson, Brittany Curtis, and Jyl Wightman, Teachers

I-35 Little Roadrunner Preschool Program Goals

Goal One:

Interactions between children and adults will provide opportunities for children to develop an understanding of self and others. These interactions will be characterized by respect, warmth, individuality, support, and responsiveness. The staff will facilitate interactions among children to provide opportunities for development of self-esteem, social competence, and intellectual growth.

Goal Two:

The curriculum will engage children actively in the learning process, provide a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences, and encourage children to pursue their own interests.

Goal Three:

Staff and families will work closely in partnership to ensure high-quality care and education for children. Parents and staff members will support each other and parents will feel welcomed as integral contributors to the program.

Goal Four:

The program will be taught by state certified teachers. Teachers and associates will participate in on-going professional development. All adults who work with the children, including volunteers and substitutes, will work to recognize and meet the developmental and learning needs of children and families.

Goal Five:

The program will be efficiently and effectively administered with attention to the individual needs of children, families, and staff.

Goal Six:

The program will be sufficiently staffed to meet the needs of and to promote the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children.

Goal Seven:

The indoor and outdoor physical environments will be set up to foster maximum growth and development opportunities for exploration and learning.

Goal Eight:

The health and safety of the children and adults are protected and enhanced at all times, both indoors and out.

Goal Nine:

The nutritional needs of children are met in a manner that promotes physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Philosophy

The Interstate 35 Little Roadrunner

Preschool is a high quality program that uses developmentally appropriate practices to provide a safe and caring environment that stimulates the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children in order to better prepare them for future educational endeavors. The program supports and encourages positive parent-school relations. The program appreciates the uniqueness of each child and provides a variety of opportunities to meet the needs of each child.

Mission

The Interstate 35 Community School

District exists to develop life-long learners and responsible, productive, successful citizens in an ever-changing society.

Your Child's Day

What does my child need to bring?

Your child will have a private space to hold all his/her personal belongings. At least one change of clothing, labeled with your child's name, needs to be at school at all times. All clothing needs to be appropriate for the weather of the current season. During the cold winter months, children need to have snow pants, boots, gloves, a hat, and a coat at school every day.

Pictures of each child's parents, grandparents, pets, etc, are hung on the wall of the classroom to ease the transition each day to preschool and to help children through times of missing family members. Please send a picture that is copied or scanned, or send a picture that is not a family treasure. Keep in mind that hanging on a preschool classroom wall all year long, there may be some damage.

At Little Roadrunner Preschool, we have a number of fun and educational toys for your child to interact with every day. Although a small comfort item is welcome for rest time, we ask that you keep your child's toys and special personal items at home for fear of loss or breakage. On your child's assigned show and share days your child may bring a special item. Although we are more than happy to have your child share these items, we cannot be responsible for lost or damaged items. No toy weapons of any kind are allowed.

Each child needs to have a backpack with a folder in it that goes home and is returned daily. Parents are asked to look EVERY DAY at the take-home folder for any important papers and daily notes about your child's day at preschool. We ask that you sign and return the daily reflection. This is especially important since so many of our students ride the bus home that face-to-face communication between parents and teachers is minimal. Projects, artwork, and other child-created papers will be sent home in this folder too. If you cannot afford to purchase preschool supplies, boots, or a coat, let the program director know and confidential assistance will be provided.

Dress Code:

Your child needs to wear comfortable, washable clothes since he or she will be busy with creative learning activities that can be messy. The staff will have the children wear paint shirts for the messiest activities, but we can't guarantee that spills won't happen or that clothes will never get stained. Please do not send your child to preschool in special occasion clothes.

Outside Play and Learning

Little Roadrunner Preschool has an early childhood playground that has been developed to enhance your child's learning experiences. Your child will play outside every day, weather permitting. In the winter a feels-like temperature of 10 degrees Fahrenheit will be the lowest temperature we will go out. Your child will be climbing, sliding, running, biking, crawling, playing ball, etc, so it is important that your child be dressed comfortably and appropriately.

Rest Time

After hours of fun and active participation, your child is bound to be tired. Little Roadrunner Preschool offers each child in the all-day programs a rest time. This generally occurs during the first part of the afternoon and lasts for about an hour. Your child needs to bring a crib-sized blanket to school, labeled with his or her name. No child will be forced to sleep or be expected to rest for an inappropriate amount of time. After a reasonable amount of time, quiet activities will be provided for those children who are no longer resting.

Toilet Training

Children who attend Little Roadrunner Preschool need to be toilet trained. It is understandable that occasionally young children will have accidents. The staff and the classrooms are equipped to handle toileting accidents. No form of punishment or discipline is ever used for any type of accident. Children are encouraged to take restroom breaks often and are never told they are not allowed to use the restroom when they request to do so.

Discipline

During the preschool years, children are developing self-control. We believe in establishing consistent, understandable limits and in having teachers who respond to inappropriate behavior with insight, sensitivity, and skill. When clear, consistent and age-appropriate limits are set, children will increasingly become responsible for their own behavior. When out-of-bounds behaviors do occur, we believe children need to understand why the behavior was inappropriate, and they need to be coached on how to modify it.

At Little Roadrunner Preschool we take a preventative approach. We believe if activities are age- appropriate, developmentally appropriate, engaging and done in small groups, fewer behavior problems will occur. Staff members are trained to skillfully direct behavior to be positive. They use praise of children making good behavior choices to motivate the others to make the same choices. The staff listens to the children's feeling in order to help them work through strong emotions, and they act as role models for appropriate behavior.

In the event that a child is not responding to the above approaches, parents are notified and asked to work with the teachers to develop a plan to help the child gain self-control of his or her behaviors. If behaviors are severe in nature, a team approach is taken. The team who determines what to do about the behaviors consists of the teacher, the parents, the appropriate AEA staff, and possibly the program director.

Snacks and Lunches

Little Roadrunner Preschool offers a hot breakfast and a hot lunch program, and time for a daily snack with milk, for the all-day sections. You may send a lunch if you wish, but we request that you don't send sugary items. Most preschool sections have a snack calendar so the child bringing the snacks for everyone in the room rotates. When it is your turn to send a snack, you need to send only healthy snacks, unless you are sending birthday treats. Keep the school fully notified of any food allergies your child may have.

Conduct Expectations

Little Roadrunner staff will:

- Provide a safe and caring environment for all children.
- Provide a variety of activities to enrich the development of all children.
- Communicate regularly with parents.
- Be a positive role model for children.
- Treat your child with respect using positive affirmation and discipline.

Parent/Guardian will:

- Notify the school if his/her child will not be in attendance that day.
- Respect the hours of operation, and not drop off early or pick-up late.
- Check his/her child's folders daily.
- Pay tuition on time each month.
- Communicate to the teachers any family or personal situations that may affect the child's experience at preschool.

Children will:

- Show respect for other children, the staff, and their property.
- Respect preschool rules.
- Accept the consequences of making bad choices.
- Control his or herself so others don't get hurt, inside or outside.
- Pick up after themselves.
- Tell an adult if hurt physically or has hurt feelings.

Preschool Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Arrival

If your preschool child will be *walking with an older sibling* the older sibling needs to walk the preschool child into the classroom and make sure the teacher knows he or she is dropping off the preschooler. **No preschool children are allowed to walk to school unattended for any reason at any time.**

If your preschool child *will be dropped off, these are your two options:* you may park your vehicle and escort your child into the building or a staff member will be available at 8:00 to greet your child and escort them in to the building. **There's NO parking along the sidewalk that runs in front of the building** during drop-off and pick-up times.

If your preschooler is *riding the bus to school*, he or she will be met by a staff member and escorted to class.

Dismissal:

Your child may be picked up in the classroom at 3:15 or they will be escorted out to the circle drive for you to pick up.

If your preschool child is *riding the bus*, a teacher or associate will escort your child to the bus and see he or she gets on the right bus.

If your preschooler is *walking home* we need written permission from you. No preschool children will be allowed to walk home without the escort of an older sibling. The preschool staff will walk the town students outside to meet up with their older sibling.

Anytime your child's dismissal plan changes, even if just for one day, you need to send a note and tell us. We will not take the child's word for it. **Only with a note, email, or phone call from a guardian can your child's dismissal routine be changed.**

Do not ever take your child from school without letting his or her teacher know.

Preschool attendance is tracked through the elementary office, so parents need to notify the secretary if they are taking their child from school early. Also, if parents bring their child in late, they need to stop by the office so the secretary can write down what time the child arrived.

You will need to fill out the form listing who is allowed to pick your child up. Only those people to whom you have given us permission can pick up your child.

If there are any court orders denying another parent access to your child, we have to have those papers on file in order to honor it.

Hours of Operation, Enrollment, and Tuition Information

The Little Roadrunner preschool is housed as a part of the I-35 Community School District elementary building and is financed through parent tuition, a four year-old SWVP Grant, the school district's general fund, a state of Iowa Shared Visions Grant, and Empowerment funding. The preschool's purpose is to use research-proven methods in a developmentally appropriate environment with the ultimate goal of helping to better prepare the children of the community for the transition into public education. Little Roadrunner Preschool offers part-time and full-time sections to meet the preschool needs of the community.

Preschool Full-Day

These three sections are full-time, from 8:15 to 3:15, Tuesday through Friday. They are geared for children who will turn four or five years old by September 15, 2012. The tuition cost for the 2012-2013 school year is \$80 for four year-olds and \$240 for five year-olds. Fees may be adjusted each year.

Preschool A.M.

This is a half-day section of preschool that meets from 8:15 to 11:15 on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. This program is in collaboration with our full day program, but is geared for three year-olds. The tuition for the 2012-2013 school year is \$160 for all three year-olds. Fees may be adjusted each year.

Payment and Costs

Tuition for all sections is due in the elementary office the first of each month, September through May. A reminder note will be sent home at the end of each month. If payment is not made by the 15th of any given month and no arrangements have been made with the program director, a letter will be sent home stating the amount due and the consequences if not paid. After falling behind with one month's payments and not having made arrangements with the director, the child will no longer be enrolled in the program and will not be allowed back the following month.

Little Roadrunner Preschool receives on-going grant money from the state in the form of a Shared Visions of Iowa grant. Qualification is primarily based on income, but some secondary factors do exist. If you think you may qualify for this financial assistance, contact the elementary office for an application. If you have secondary factors that you believe warrant consideration, please visit with Casey Christensen, Director. All aspects of this grant, from the application process to paying for supplies, are strictly confidential.

Financial assistance for preschool is also available through an area County Empowerment group. These agencies have significant funds available to help cover the cost of preschool. You can pick up an application form in the office. Applications are filed directly with the county empowerment board. Empowerment will notify you and the school of the funding level. ***Whatever empowerment does not cover, you will need to pay each month.*** This information is kept strictly confidential.

Preschool tuition does not include the cost of breakfast or lunch. These are offered at an additional cost to the parents of children in preschool. Each family will have an account set up through the food service program and payments can be made through the elementary office. When checks are written for breakfast or lunch, they need to be written out to "I-35 Community School," and they need to be separate from the monthly tuition checks. You can choose to send a cold lunch with your child if you prefer. School menus will be sent home monthly.

Conflict Resolution

Parents reserve the right to terminate their child's enrollment at anytime. The preschool program administrator also reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment at anytime, although this would only be done in extreme circumstances, and after several attempts at making the program a success for the child has proven unproductive.

When an issue of contention arises, I-35 CSD uses a chain-of-command system. If a parent has an issue that needs to be discussed, the parent first needs to address the person who is most closely related to the area of contention. This would be the teacher or the bus driver, for example. If this does not adequately satisfy the parent concern, then the parent needs to discuss the situation with the program or transportation director, whichever the case may be. If that does not adequately satisfy the parent concern, then the parent needs to discuss the situation with the Superintendent. After going through the above steps, if the parent is still not satisfied, the parent may request to be placed on the I-35 CSD School Board agenda. Parent concerns will be carefully listened to, but decisions regarding program operations, curriculum, discipline, and scheduling made by the director of the preschool program will consistently be based on the program goals and philosophy and will always consider what is best for the children that are served.

Transportation

Parents of children enrolled in preschool full-day can opt to have I-35 transport their child to and from school via school bus. Parents will need to fill out a transportation request and return it with registration materials in order for their child to be assigned a route. Bus drivers will notify parents with bus numbers and approximate time of pick-up and drop-off.

Children enrolled in preschool A.M. can be brought to school via bus, but no bus transportation will be provided to take the child home. Parents need to fill out a transportation request and return it to the office in order for their child to be assigned a route. Bus service for the Preschool AM is set up this way as the I-35 school district does not run a mid-day route.

All children riding the bus need to understand and follow appropriate bus behaviors. Preschool children will be seated up front. Many of our newer buses have safety harnesses. These will be used with our preschool students for safety purposes. If you have questions regarding the transportation of your child to or from school please contact the transportation director at (641) 765-4720.

Registration

Notification of the Registration Meeting

All parents with an interest in sending their child to Little Roadrunner Preschool the next school year can find the information regarding registration dates and requirements in the district newspaper, "*The Roadrunner Report*." It's also available on the district web site at www.i-35.k12.ia.us flyers will also be hung around the school and neighboring community business.

Registration

Parents can register their child for preschool by dropping off the registration materials at the school office, or by attending the school wide registration in August. Registration continues right up to, and through, the beginning of the school year, until the sections are full. A waiting list will be created if necessary.

Child Information Form

During registration parents are asked to fill out an information form about your child. This includes foods that are disliked, any fears your child may have, and other such information that will help the teachers get to know your child prior to the start of preschool.

Registration Fee

The non-refundable registration fee is due at the time of registration. Your child does not have a spot in the preschool program until the registration fee is paid. Families that qualify for financial assistance do not have to pay the fee as it is paid by the grantee. There will be a \$20.00 charge for returned checks.

Program and Staff Evaluations

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

NAEYC is the largest and most influential organizations of early childhood educators and is dedicated to improving programs for children birth to six-years-old. NAEYC sets the standards for quality childcare and education in America, and Little Roadrunner Preschool is committed to meeting these standards. These standards are the measurement for excellence in early childhood education.

Through the NAEYC accreditation program, Little Roadrunner Preschool will go through a comprehensive, labor-intensive evaluation every five years. This program evaluation literally considers every aspect imaginable in a preschool program, and sets its standards very high for each of these aspects. By becoming an accredited program, Little Roadrunner Preschool can assure parents and the community that the best possible care and education are being given to their children. Little Roadrunner Preschool went through the accreditation process during the 2009-2010 school year and was fully accredited in the fall of 2010.

Staff Evaluation

The teachers at Little Roadrunner Preschool go through a comprehensive, official, professional evaluation once every three years, as required by the school district. The teachers work yearly with the program director to set goals and develop a plan for successful implementation of those goals. The associates complete a self-evaluation, also done with input from the program director, once a year.

Family and Staff Input

As part of the accreditation process, a comprehensive program evaluation is given to parents and staff members every five years. This feedback is used to help the staff see needed areas of improvement. This information is used to identify areas of needed improvement. Parents and staff are encouraged to share ideas for needed improvement on an on-going basis.