

# KEARNEY BRIGHT FUTURES PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

This handbook shares important guidelines and procedures related to the preschool program. Please read this information carefully and sign the handbook receipt to indicate you have been informed of our rules and protocols. If you have questions or concerns about the information, please contact your child's teacher or one of the preschool contacts located at the end of this document.

## KEARNEY BRIGHT FUTURES PRESCHOOL

The Kearney Public Schools (KPS) provides preschool options for children who meet specific guidelines related to income, low birth weight, premature birth, English Language Learner or other special needs. The preschool classrooms are staffed with a certified early childhood teacher and a trained paraprofessional. The class size is a maximum of 19 students with one morning half-day session consisting of 3 and 4 year-olds. Sessions meet Monday through Friday for a 3-hour session. We have four full day classrooms consisting of 3 and 4 year-olds. They meet 6.5-hour a day Monday through Friday. Students are selected into classrooms based on a variety of need characteristics. Parents are responsible for transportation to and from the preschool site. The grant-funded preschool is intended to serve students of need. If more seats remain, students may attend on a tuition basis. The Bright Futures Preschool follows established Kearney Public Schools guidelines included in the Elementary Handbook as well as Rule 11 guidelines.

Registration forms and additional information are available on the Kearney Public Schools website ([www.kearneypublic.org](http://www.kearneypublic.org)). You may also call the 698 8004 or email [micbond@kearneycats.com](mailto:micbond@kearneycats.com).

In compliance with the Nebraska Department of Education Rule 11 on Early Childhood Education Programs, only children who turn 3 or 4 years of age by August 1st of the current school year will be considered eligible for the preschool program.

**PRESCHOOL ADDRESS:** All Bright Futures preschool classes are held at the Kearney Education Center located at 1511 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. Entrance is on the northeast corner of the building (by the gym).

### **Preschool hours:**

Morning Session	8:30 am to 11:30 am
Full Day Session	8:30 am to 3:15 pm

**Program Tuition:** A tuition fee is charged on a sliding fee scale. Tuition payments are due by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month and all families pay the tuition fee (unless they qualify for free meals). Failure to pay tuition may result in removal from the program unless alternative arrangements have been made with district officials.

## **IMPORTANT APPLICATION INFORMATION**

Applications to attend Bright Futures Preschool are accepted at any time of the year at the Kearney Public Schools administration offices located at 310 W. 24<sup>th</sup> St. Applications are reviewed in May and the first round is accepted. . All students will be selected by August 15. Notification of acceptance will be made by letter in May through August. If you have questions about a child's acceptance into the preschool program, you may contact the KPS registrar.

1. **RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT:** Families must live within the Kearney Public Schools boundaries. Proof of residency must be presented to the KPS registrar.

2. **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:**

-KPS Bright Futures Application Form

-Bright Futures Registration Form

-Finance-You can submit your monthly salary information or Current Tax return if you want consideration for lower income qualification. When you are selected, income information may allow reduced tuition. (If not provided at the time of application, students will not receive points in income 'need' category.) For welfare reporting, provide official card indicating state funding through agencies.

-State Certified Copy of the Student's Birth Certificate

-Updated immunization record and student health survey

3. **FREE/REDUCED LUNCH APPLICATION: (OPTIONAL)** if you feel you may qualify for a free or reduced meal cost, you may fill out the application provided by the Bearcat Diner and return it to them. You will be notified of your acceptance.

## **What you should know**

**Calendar:** The Bright Futures Preschool will begin classes in August. The actual date will be determined annually, but is generally a week after elementary students begin. The full day preschool program will meet from 8:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m. Students in this class will have breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. Classes meet on Monday-Friday. The half day morning preschool will meet from 8:30-11:30. Breakfast is an important part of morning class. The preschool program follows the Kearney Public Schools district calendar throughout the school year, ending a few days prior to elementary school ending.

**Home Visits:** The child's preschool teacher will contact families in August for an initial home visit. The purpose of the visit is to have your child meet the teacher, to establish a relationship between the family and the teacher, to review preschool guidelines and to complete necessary paper work. An additional home visit will be made sometime throughout the remainder of the school year.

**Breakfast and Lunch:** Each preschool session includes a meal. Morning students eat breakfast. Full day students will have a breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. This is an important part of the preschool experience. A snack will be provided during each preschool session. Families that do not qualify for free/reduced meals are charged the Bearcat Diner breakfast or lunch price. The lunch program accounting system is a debit system, which means that you deposit money into your family account and as students eat, the meal charge is deducted from your family lunch account balance. It is necessary to keep money in the family account so children can continue to purchase against it.

Payment for lunches should be written to the Bearcat Diner Office at 4611 Ave. N, Kearney, Ne. 68847. Payment may be dropped off at your school. For your convenience, a payment drop-off box behind City Hall, along with the other utility payment drop-off boxes, is available.

## **Getting Students to and from School Everyday**

**DROP-OFF:** Students may be dropped off **no more than 15 minutes** prior to the start of their schooling. Parents or another adult **MUST** accompany the child to the designated drop-off point in the building and sign the child in. If there are scheduling conflicts for drop-off, please talk to your child's teacher. Your child will be considered tardy from 8:30 am to 9:30 am. If arriving after 9:30 am, the student will be considered absent for the morning session of preschool. Breakfast may not be available if your child arrives late.

**PICK-UP:** It is critical that parents pick up their child on time. Come to the designated pick-up point. Staff will not on supervision duty, so arrive promptly. Habitual late pick-ups may result in your child's dismissal from the program. After 5 late pick -ups a note will be sent home. After 10 late pick-ups a meeting will be arranged with parents/guardians and school principal and/or social worker. When there are 20 or more late pick-ups possible exclusion from the program. We will try to be flexible with scheduling needs so please talk to us about any issues.

**Attendance:** Regular and punctual student attendance is required. Absence from school is a hardship on both pupil and teacher. Parents are responsible for developing behaviors of regular and punctual student attendance. The district strongly encourages parents to arrange health-related appointments for their children after school hours or on non-school days. Illness, injury, death in the family, or extreme family hardship are understandable absences.

When a child has 5 absences a note will be sent home to discuss the importance of attendance and to determine a reason for the absences. After 10 absences a meeting will be held with parents/guardians and school principal and/or social worker to develop a collaborative plan to reduce family barriers causing irregular attendance. The plan shall consider such things as: Illness related to physical or behavioral health of the child; Educational evaluation; Referral to community agencies for economic services; Family or individual counseling; assisting the family in working with other community agencies. Parent or guardian refusal to participate in such meeting may result in removal from the Bright Futures Preschool program.

**Illness:** If your child is running a fever, has a persistent cough or runny nose that is difficult to control, or has had diarrhea, vomiting or fever in the previous 24 hours, please do not bring the child to preschool. He/she needs to be symptom-free without medication. At school - If your child appears to have pink eye or just does not seem to feel well, even without a fever, we will call and ask that you come get your child. Viruses spread quickly in the preschool classroom and we do the best that we can to help prevent that with frequent hand washing, table and toy disinfecting, and learning to cover coughs and sneezes. Please help us by keeping your child at home if their health is in question. A child who misses more than 3 consecutive days of preschool due to illness must have a note from a physician addressing health issue.

### **Weather and Schedule Change Guidelines:**

We will follow the same schedule as the KPS K-12 district. Please listen to the radio or TV for school closing information. You will also receive a district phone call, so please keep your phone numbers current with us. If KPS has excessive bad weather days, the preschool may also need to add days to achieve the state's required hours of instruction. You will be notified in advance should this happen.

**When there is Teacher In-Service Meetings, School Improvement, etc., preschool will follow the same calendar as elementary schools.** So there will be some no-school days due to teacher training. Your child's teacher will keep you informed of those dates.

**Family Activities:** A family activity will be held each month. The purpose of the family activity is to build the relationship between home and school and to involve parents in the preschool program. Activities will be held at a variety of times and in a variety of formats. Families will receive information about the activities on a monthly basis. Your participation is needed.

**Field Trips:** Field trips are scheduled to a variety of locations. Field trip experiences build a child's language and awareness of the world. Parents will be notified when field trips are scheduled and will be asked to sign a field trip permission slip at the beginning of the school year. Parents are encouraged to volunteer to assist with the field trips when possible.

**Assessment and Reporting:** The following methods will be used to inform parents of a child's progress in the preschool program:

Report Cards: A preschool report card will be sent home with students at Parent Teacher Conferences (February).

Portfolio: An ongoing data collection through the school year that is sent home in May

GOLD Assessment: This is a required state assessment that measures student growth over the year. Results will be shared with parents.

Parent Teacher Conferences: Conferences are held twice a year (September and February). Parents will be contacted by their child's teacher to schedule a conference time.

**Communication:** Communication between home and school is very important. All questions and concerns should be addressed with the child's teacher. Contact information is included at the end of this document. Newsletters will be sent home with preschool students to inform parents of classroom activities and special events. District phone messaging may be used to remind parents of events or to let parents know about weather related issues.

**PRESCHOOL CONTACTS:**

Tom Jochum	Principal	698-8050
Dr. Carol Renner	Director of Student Services	698 8005
Melisa Dobish	Special Education Director	698-8019
Niki Peterson	Social Worker	293-5508
Janelle Kowalek	Preschool Teacher	698-8058
Christy Margritz	Preschool Teacher	698-8058
Brandi Dorsey	Preschool Teacher	698-8058
Chelsea Bartling	Preschool Teacher	698-8058
Lindsie Thiems	Preschool Teacher	698-8058
Kelli Urbanek	Nurse	627-6938
Michelle Bond	Adm Associate	698-8004

For interpretation services call: Paula Gaasch 698-8046

Note: Voice Mail can be left at these numbers.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS -**

Any changes of address, telephone number, emergency reference, place of employment, or doctor should be reported to the school. You may not get important district notices if you have not kept this information updated.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Kearney Public Schools uses the 'Early Learning Guidelines for Ages 3-5', *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* and *Eureka Math* as a framework for the Bright Futures Preschool program. The following elements are included in the preschool program.

**Social / Emotional Development** is about socialization, the process by which children learn the values and behaviors accepted by society.

**Physical Development** includes gross (large muscle) and fine (small muscle) motor skills. Gross motor includes balance and stability, movements such as running, jumping, hopping, galloping, and skipping and physical manipulations such as throwing, kicking and catching. Fine motor development involves using and coordination the small muscles in the hands and wrists. As fine muscles develop, children are able to perform self-help skills and manipulate small objects such as scissors and writing tools.

**Cognitive Development** involves how children think, how they see their world, and how they use what they learn.

**Language Development** includes understanding and communicating through words, spoken and written. Language development includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

## PRESCHOOL SCHEDULE:

**Preschool Schedule** includes time for arrival, large group and small group learning activities, individual choice centers, outdoor play, a meal, snack, and departure. The amount of time for each period is based on the daily time in preschool. Weather permitting; children go outdoors each day. Be sure your child is dressed and has outside clothing appropriate for that day's temperature.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

**The Teacher's Role:** The teacher's role includes observing children, guiding children's learning, and assessing children's learning.

1. As teachers observe children, they are gathering information to know each child as an individual. They identify how, when, and what to observe. Observations are objective records of what children are doing. The use of *GOLD* guides the teacher in making the observation process systematic.

2. Teachers use *Creative Curriculum* to help guide their teaching. *The Foundation* helps teachers create a high-quality learning environment and build a thorough understanding of best practices. *Daily Resources* help teachers plan and manage every moment of their day. Through studies, which are hands-on, project-based investigations, *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* helps teachers build children's confidence, creativity and critical thinking skills, and promote positive outcomes. *Eureka Math* is also used to involve students in the math processes they will use throughout their school career. *Eureka Math* connects math to the real world in ways that take the fear out of math and build student confidence—helping students achieve true understanding lesson by lessons and year after year.

3. Teachers use a range of teaching approaches to guide children's learning. These approaches may include child-initiated learning, teacher-directed learning, interacting with children to promote learning, talking with children about their work, asking children questions, and adapting instruction to meet the individual needs of all students. These groups may include large group, small group, and individual instruction.

4. Teachers use assessment as a process of gathering information about children in order to make decisions. The purpose of assessment is to support learning, identify special needs, program evaluation and monitoring trends, and or program accountability. Assessments may include collecting samples of work, photographs of a child's work and activities, and a written record of activities.

5. Teachers also communicate on a regular basis with family. These communications include a home visit before school starts, open house, parent teacher conferences as well as newsletters, phone calls, and visits when dropping off or picking up a child. Please contact your child's teacher anytime you have questions or concerns.

**The Family's Role:** The child's home and school are their two most important worlds. The partnership developed between the school, staff and families is critical to the child's growth. This partnership involves getting to know families, making families feel welcome, communicating with families, partnering with families on children's learning and responding to challenging situations. Communication can include daily and weekly exchanges in the way of newsletters, phone calls, e-mail, visits before or after school, parent teacher conferences.

### **INTEREST AREAS IN THE CLASSROOM:**

Interest areas found in each preschool setting include blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, art, library, discovery, sand and water, music and movement, cooking, computers, and outdoors.

**Blocks:** Blocks are one of the most valuable learning materials in a preschool classroom. They come in different sizes and shapes. For this reason when children begin building with blocks they learn math concepts such as the number of blocks that fill a certain space. They compare the height of their buildings and learn about geometric shapes. When they lift, shove, stack, and move blocks, they explore weight and size. Each time they use blocks, children are making decisions about how to build a structure or solve a construction problem. Children often use blocks to recreate the world around them---a road, a house, the zoo. They work together and learn to cooperate and make friends. Teachers encourage children to talk about what they are doing to promote language development. Teachers also talk with children and ask questions to expand on their block play.

**Dramatic Play:** During dramatic play children take on different roles and recreate real-life experiences. They use props and make-believe to deepen their understanding about the world in which they live. The ability to pretend is very important to a child's development. Children who know how to make believe develop a good vocabulary, which is important to reading. They learn to cooperate with others and solve problems, are able to think abstractly---all-important skills for success in school. When children pretend, they have to recall experiences and re-create them. To do this, they need to picture their experiences in their minds.

**Toys and Games:** Toys and games include puzzles, various table blocks, and small construction materials such as Legos, board games, and collections of objects. When children use toys and games, they explore how things work, learn to be creative and use their imaginations, strengthen and control the small muscles in their hands, work cooperatively and solve problems, and learn math ideas and concepts. When children use toys and games in the classroom, teachers encourage them to talk about what they are doing.

**Art:** Art is an important part of the curriculum. Every day children can find a variety of art materials available on classroom shelves. Drawing, painting, pasting, molding and constructing are not only enjoyable but also provide important opportunities for learning. Children express original

ideas and feelings, improve their coordination, learn to recognize colors and textures, and develop creativity and pride in their accomplishments by exploring and using art materials. When children are engaged in art activities, teachers talk to them about what they are doing and ask questions that encourage them to think about their ideas and express feelings. Teachers say things that will encourage children to be creative and confident.

**Library:** A library area is an important part of the classroom and of a child's life. It's where children gain the foundation for reading and writing. It's also a place where children can relax and enjoy the wonderful world of children's books. Teachers encourage children to look at books, to listen to taped stories, to retell stories, and to scribble and "write" throughout the day. Sometimes children dictate stories to teachers, which are recorded as books. Teachers read stories to children every day. Reading introduces new ideas, helps children learn how to handle problems that come up in life, and mostly encourage them to develop a love for books. As children listen to teachers read, their own reading skills begin to develop.

**Discovery:** Young children have many questions about the world around them. A discovery area is a place where children can explore and investigate to answer their questions. Children observe, experiment, measure, solve problems, take things apart, and explore the materials and living things that are displayed. When children are in a discovery area, they do what scientists do---ask questions, plan and conduct investigations, gather information, construct an explanation, and communicate findings. They also learn important concepts in science as they study plants, animals, magnets, properties of materials, light shadows, how things work, rainbows, our body, our senses, how they move and change, and more. In addition to learning science content, they learn how to solve problems together and how to communicate with others.

**Sand and Water:** Both sand and water are natural materials for learning. When children pour water into measuring cups, they are exploring math concepts. When they drop corks, stones, feathers, or marbles into a tub of water, they are scientists exploring which objects float and which sink. When they comb sand into patterns, they learn about both math and art.

**Music and Movement:** There is a lot of singing and creative movement in the preschool program. Singing and moving to music gives the children a chance to hear and appreciate different kinds of music, express themselves through their movement, and practice new skills. Children love the daily time for singing together and it helps them learn to cooperate in a group.

**Cooking:** When children cook they have an opportunity to learn about nutrition, to be creative, and to prepare their own healthy snacks. Cooking teaches a lot of academic skills, too. When children learn to follow picture recipe cards, they develop skills they need to read and write. Measuring 1 cup of flour and pouring  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of lemon juice into batter gives them a lesson in math. When children cook, teachers talk about what they are doing and why. Children become scientists, observing what happens to flour when water is added and predicting how high a muffin tin should be filled so the batter doesn't overflow. When special foods are prepared from each family, a child learns to appreciate a variety of cultures.

**Computers:** Computers are learning tools for children. Children learn to be comfortable with technology, beginning reading and writing skills, math skills and concepts such as counting, how to express themselves creatively, and how to solve problems and begin to do research. Teachers encourage children to work at the computer in pairs or small groups. This helps children learn from each other and develops their social skills at the same time.

**Outdoors:** Physical exercise and fresh air are important for children's health and well-being. Teachers take children outdoors every day so they can run, jump, swing, climb, and use all the large muscles in their bodies. They run around, breathe in the fresh air, look at the clouds, or catch a ball or a bug. Children lie on the ground and watch clouds and birds, or they climb high and look down. Teachers talk to children about the things they see, hear, touch, and feel so they become aware of changes in the weather, the seasons, the growth of plants, and the animals. Playing outdoors can help children learn to notice and appreciate changes in nature, to discover how water puddles after a rain and disappears when the sun comes out, to follow shadows around, and to use their body in increasingly skillful ways.

**Writing:** The writing center is another way to develop language and literacy through meaningful experience. Young children experiment with writing by drawing, copying, stenciling, tracing, labeling, and inventing their own spelling. A print rich classroom environment motivates children's interest around written language. The writing area provides children with a means to document their ideas, thoughts, and experiences. All levels of writing are applauded!

**The Kearney Public School Preschool Staff strives to provide a quality program for all children drawing upon the availability of other professionals who have expertise in the development of speech and language skills, gross and fine motor skills, social skills and behavior. Our relationship with Kindergarten teachers helps us build a strong foundation for the skills and behaviors that are expected in Kindergarten. Bright Futures teachers support the transition of children into the kindergarten program. We want this experience to be rewarding for children and their families and look forward to spending time with each of you!**

### *Students in Transition with Need-*

Students who are in a temporary living condition, lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and also have sustenance needs, may contact the Enrollment Office at 308-698-8029 to complete the necessary paper work to secure supportive services. Kearney Public schools administers a McKinney-Vento grant to support students and families that are homeless or in transition to keep students attending school.

## ***Building Protocol***

### **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS/ EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN -**

Physical protection of every school pupil is a responsibility that rests upon all officials involved in administering educational programs. The district is concerned with safety as it relates to school environment as well as protecting pupils from possible disaster.

Procedures are included in the district's EMERGENCY RESPONSE MANUAL.

All school personnel are provided a "Kearney Public Schools Emergency Response Checklist" and are inserviced on handling situations resulting from disasters.

- Some of the topics covered in the EMERGENCY RESPONSE MANUAL are:
  - Crisis identification
  - Fire
  - Tornado
  - Winter storm/blizzard
  - Bomb threat

- Intruder in the building/lockdown
- Evacuation of the school to another location
- Hazardous materials/shelter in place
- Abduction of a student
- Student/staff death
- Medical emergency

The school district works frequently with Emergency Management Services and law enforcement officials to continue important communication and cooperative response efforts. The school district also engages the services of outside experts to conduct an annual security audit to meet NDE Rule 10 requirements.

## **CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT REPORTING -**

When a school employee or any other person has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes such person being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, he or she shall report such incident or cause a report to be made to the proper school authorities, including the building principal, school nurse, or school counselor. A copy of the report will be filed with the Superintendent of Schools. School authorities will contact the proper law enforcement agency and/or Health and Human Services.

Law enforcement officials and/or social service workers may be permitted to interview the possible student victim at the school, upon notice to the school officials.

## **ANTIDISCRIMINATION/HARASSMENT -**

The Kearney Public School District complies with all state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination. This school district assures compliance with such laws against any prohibited form of discrimination.

The Kearney Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, marital status, pregnancy, childbirth or other related medical condition, or other protected status, in the programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding student non-discrimination policies:

Dr. Carol Renner, PhD  
 Director of Student Services  
 320 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Kearney, Ne. 68845  
 308-698-8005

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