



Growing Tree
Preschool

Parent Handbook for children enrolled in 3 and 4 year old classes

2020-2021

Updated 8/25/2020



Gurnee
Park District

Table of Contents

Preschool Philosophy	3
Parent Orientation	3
Class Starting Dates	3
Meet the Teachers	4
Important Phone Numbers	4
Program Locations	4
Entrance Requirements: Age and Toilet Training	5
Forms Required - Submitting Forms Using Epact	5
Adjusting to School	5
Social Skill Development	6
Curriculum	6
Role of the Parent	6
What to Bring/Wear to School	7
Items from Home	7
Outdoor Play	7
Health Policy	7-8
Required Immunizations	9
Drop Off Procedures	9
Drop Off Procedures – inclement weather	9
Pick Up Procedures	10
Late Pick Up Policy	10
Discipline	11
Code of Conduct	11
Calendar, Newsletter, Email Correspondence	11
Invitations at School	11
Class Lists	12
Skill Assessments/Conferences	12
Snack at School	12
Emergency Closings	12
School Calendar - No Class Dates	13
Payment Policy	13
Payment Procedures	13

Preschool Philosophy

Welcome to the Gurnee Park District Growing Tree Preschool! Our goal and purpose is reflected in our Preschool Philosophy, and we are confident that the Gurnee Park District Preschool will aid in the growth and development of your child.

The Gurnee Park District mission is Promoting Fun, and Preserving Nature, and our preschool philosophy carries forward that theme. In preschool our philosophy is to educate children through guided and free exploration in a play-based, creative and nurturing atmosphere. We believe that honoring and nurturing the individuality of each child will encourage respect for oneself and for others. We strive to develop a united common goal between families and preschool staff to build academic, social and self-help skills. Our ultimate goal is for children to love coming to school.

Our primary goal is to provide your child with the best possible preschool experience. We value the diversity of each family, and each child's individuality, and strive to build self-esteem and respect for others. We look forward to every day and the happiness we can bring to your child's learning experience.

Included in this handbook are our objectives, general information, policies and procedures utilized in preschool and other pertinent information. Please read the handbook carefully. Questions and additional information will be provided at the Parent Orientation Meeting.

Parent Orientation Meeting

A link will be provided via email to a video for parents to watch along with this Parent Handbook. Any additional questions can be emailed to smcdougle@gurneeparkdistrict.com.

Start Dates:

Monday - Friday Classes begin Monday, August 31

Monday/Wednesday/Friday Classes begin Monday, August 31

Tuesday/Thursday Classes begin Tuesday, September 1

Meet the Teachers

The teachers will be preparing a video introducing themselves and providing a tour of their classroom, location of each child's cubby, and an outline of the class structure for parents and students to watch. These videos are available on Class Dojo. You have received an invitation via email to join your child's Class Dojo.

Important Phone Numbers

Gurnee Park District (Main Office) (847) 623-7788 9:30a-2:30p Monday-Friday
Viking Preschool Room # 1 (847) 599-5491
Hunt Club Preschool Room #1 (847) 599-5461
Hunt Club Preschool Room #2 (847) 599-5462
Hunt Club Preschool Room #3 (847) 599-5463
Hunt Club Preschool Room #4 (847) 599-5476

Sue McDougale, Director (847) 599-3767
Aimee Schneider, Coordinator (847) 599-5499

Program Locations

Viking Park Community Center
4374 Old Grand Avenue
Gurnee, IL 60031

Hunt Club Community Center
920 N. Hunt Club Road
Gurnee, IL 60031

Photography/video, for publicity purposes, may be taken during the program.

Entrance Requirements

3 years old on or before September 1, 2020, for a 3 year old class
4 years old or older on or before September 1, 2020, for a 4 year old class

Note: Your child must be able to wear a mask while at school (indoors and out) and must also respond to teachers reminders about wearing a mask and physical distancing.

Independence in the Bathroom (Toilet Trained):

Pull-ups and diapers are prohibited. Children must be able to independently recognize the urge to go to the bathroom in an amount of time sufficient to get to the bathroom and use the toilet. The child must be able to independently pull down necessary clothing, sit/stand, wipe, flush, pull up necessary clothing, wash/dry hands. To maximize classroom instruction time, teachers are not able to send a child to the bathroom in regular increments (i.e. every 30 minutes), touch a child to facilitate urination, wipe or change children. It is understood that infrequently children may have an accident. We will monitor while the child changes clothes but will call parents to change the child should a bowel movement occur.

The beginning of the school year is a time of adjustment and some parents may want to send their child in a pull up as they acclimate. This will be allowed through October 9, after which children must attend in underwear and use the toilet independently.

Forms Required/Submitting Forms Using ePact

All forms are due no later than **August 20, 2020**. We are utilizing a new digital form collection system, ePact. You will receive an email with instructions to set up your account and complete the form. You will upload your child's birth certificate and health examination form to your online ePact account. This is required for all students, even those who attended last year. We are unable to upload forms to your ePact account and we are unable to accept paper forms.

Forms Required

1. Online preschool information completed on ePact
2. Uploaded Copy of Birth Certificate
3. Uploaded Copy of Child Health Examination form listing necessary immunizations, signed and dated by the physician of record with the parent section (page 2) completed and signed by a parent. This form is available at every physician's office

A Permission to Dispense Medication form is needed for children with potentially life-threatening allergies requiring medication while at preschool. Complete and upload this form to your ePact account. Medication in the original container may be given to the teachers at Meet the Teachers or by the first day of school.

All children must have a submitted ePact information form to attend preschool

Adjusting To School

Please arrive on time. Parents will not be able to enter the building so arriving late will require a teacher to leave the classroom to get your child at the front of the building. This greatly disrupts the flow of class. Tell your child that you will return, and understand that some children have to experience that you will come back before they can fully adjust.

Our teachers are trained and experienced in their approach to helping your child adjust to preschool. Meeting the teachers and talking to your child about coming to preschool is very important. Sometimes tears happen. Be reassured that we will care gently for your child, however, please be available for our call if your child is having an exceptionally difficult time adjusting during the first days of school.

Social Skill Development

Our teachers strive to provide a happy and positive atmosphere in which children learn and grow. Sometimes children find themselves in situations that require redirection and reminders. We make every effort to keep children safe and happy, however, sometimes children need our guidance to help them with social situations. Please be aware that some children may react physically (biting, hitting, pushing, throwing objects), and verbally ("you're not my friend" "I don't like you" "You can't play") at this point in development, and we will correct the situation as soon as it arises. You will be informed of the behaviors mentioned above should they occur on a regular basis, or if there is a pattern of behavior about which we are

concerned. **Please note that all children will be required to wear a mask while at school except at lunch (if applicable) and maintain social distancing when practical. Please practice both of these things with your child prior to the first day of class.** We may ask for your suggestions and confer with you on specific ideas to help your child's social development, and we may determine that your child is not developmentally ready for a classroom setting.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is based on the Illinois State Board of Education Early Learning Standards for preschool. The eight learning areas are: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Physical Development and Health, Fine Arts, Foreign Language, Social/Emotional Development. Within these learning areas are more than 100 benchmarks that are incorporated in the curriculum throughout the three and four year old preschool years. More information as to monthly themes and daily activities will be provided on the monthly calendar and weekly emails. The most important components of our curriculum include being self-sufficient with clothing and belongings (i.e. zipping, switching from shoes to boots, stowing belongings in the cubby, bringing a water bottle, remembering home/school folder), returning a greeting given by teachers/staff, treating all children and adults with kindness and respect.

Role of the Parent

The first days of preschool are an exciting day for parents and children! Children enjoy carrying a special backpack, wear a special outfit, and look forward to meeting old and new friends in the classroom. This day may also contain some anxious moments for your child and you.

- Be very positive, but being overly enthusiastic can cause anxiety in some children.
- Adopt a calm, positive and reassuring approach if your child expresses hesitancy.
- Some children have no anxiety or separation issues, some do not in the first week but experience this later.
- Returning preschoolers may also have a period of adjustment and experience anxiety.
- Parent anxiety is common and should be expected! Preschool is a new experience for parents also.
- Know that your child's ability to be independent in a classroom setting enhances the parent/child bond.
- You will enjoy hearing about the exciting new things your child will learn and fun new experiences.
- Avoid showing emotion in front of your child. Some children become upset when they see this.

Parents can provide children with some important tools to ensure a smooth transition and ongoing success in preschool.

- Have your child practice wearing a mask at home and when outside.
- Have your child stay with a trusted adult without you present before school begins to reduce separation anxiety.
- Establish a healthy bedtime routine so your child is well rested each school day.
- Prepare a healthy breakfast for your child before coming to school.
- Make school an important family priority!
 - ✓ Empty your child's backpack and home/school folder together.
 - ✓ Ask your child how she made the art project.
 - ✓ Compliment her effort to write her name and practice at home.
 - ✓ Have her sing a new song that she learned at school.

- ✓ Ask her which center was her favorite to play in.
- ✓ Tell your child how proud you are of her and what she has accomplished.
- Refer to the monthly calendar and be sure to help your child pick out a clothing item on "wear red day" or bring an item from home beginning with the letter of the week on show and tell day.

What to Bring and Wear to School

Masks (x2) that covers your child's nose and mouth, fits well and will stay on
 Backpack or tote bag (large enough to hold 9"x12" home/school folder that will be provided)
 Reusable water bottle filled with water
 Complete set of extra clothes including socks and underwear.
 Closed-toe shoes (gym shoes)- sandals and Crocs are prohibited
 Jacket or sweatshirt
 Sunscreen and insect repellent applied prior to arrival (fall and spring)
 Winter: warm jacket, snow pants, hat, mittens, snow boots (no tie boots)
 Children enrolled in the full day and extended day preschool classes bring a lunch and drink to school each day.

Recommended clothing and shoes

Our weather can change dramatically in just a couple of hours and the children will play outdoors each day. Children should wear comfortable clothing that can get dirty. While every effort will be made to protect clothing, painting and other preschool activities are often messy. Sandals and Crocs are dangerous when children are running or using playground equipment, and woodchips from the playground surface result in splinters and hurt feet.

Toys/Items from Home

At this time children may not bring toys and other items to school at any time for safety reasons.

Outdoor Play

The children will play outdoors as much as possible when the temperature and wind chill is above 20 degrees. Our curriculum includes teaching children to put on their winter gear and to keep track of their belongings. There may be days when the temperature allows for outdoor play, but the activities planned do not allow us to dress and go out. Children will wear a mask when playing outside unless the activity allows for 6 feet of physical distancing at all times and classes only one class at a time will use the playground.

Health Policy

It has never been more important to work together to stop the spread of illness at school.

- Wellness Checks – all parents will assess their child's wellness every day before Dropping off at preschool or preschool CARE and will sign stating that the child is well.
- Teachers/staff will regularly conduct visual inspections of children for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, coughing, fatigue or other COVID-19 like symptoms.
- Please keep your child at home if there is any indication of possible illness.

As a reminder, the CDC has indicated the following as possible symptoms of COVID-19: **Cough, Shortness of breath, Difficulty breathing, Fever, Chills, Fatigue, Muscle pain, Headache, Sore throat, New loss of taste or smell, Congestion, Runny nose, Nausea, Vomiting, or Diarrhea** (Please note: This list may not be all possible symptoms, which can range from mild to severe)

- Children experiencing any of the symptoms listed above you should stay home.
- Children experiencing any of the symptoms listed above will be sent home.
- If anyone in your household is experiencing any of the above symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, they must remain home for 14 days per CDC guidelines.
- Please do not send your child to preschool if he or she exhibits any signs or symptoms of being ill or if exposed to a contagious illness. If you are concerned that your child may be ill, please take him/her to the doctor *before* dropping off at preschool.
- Families are asked to avoid close contact with individuals who are sick and to practice "Safe at Home Practices" even when your child is NOT at school to help keep everyone healthy and safe.

The health and safety of each child in the class and their family, as well as the health and safety of the teachers and their families depends on each parent strictly adhering to the above guidelines.

Children exhibiting the symptoms listed above may return to school with a note from their doctor stating that they are safe to return to school. If a COVID-19 test has occurred, negative test results must be provided prior to their return to school.

Children must be fever free without the use of fever reducing medication, symptom free including rashes, with a doctor's note and feeling well prior to returning to school for at least 24 hours (non-COVID).

If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease (such as: COVID -19, strep throat, pink eye, Impetigo or other rash, Influenza, Rotavirus, head lice etc.) and attended class within one class day of onset of symptoms, please inform the classroom teacher.

Please be available by phone if your child should become ill. Sick children will be isolated from contact with their class. The longer a sick child remains at school the greater the risk of transmission to other children and staff. ***The teachers or preschool manager will make the final determination if a child should be sent home from school.***

If your child is injured or becomes ill while at preschool and requires more than first aid, the following steps will be taken:

- Contact the parent/caregiver/emergency contact.
- If possible, the child will be removed from the area and given care. All staff members are trained in CPR/first aid/AED, classrooms are equipped with first aid kits, and portable kits are taken to the playground and other outside areas in case immediate care is needed.
- If necessary, an injured/ill child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest hospital. A teacher will remain with the child until a parent arrives.

Required Immunizations

Following are the required immunizations to be completed prior to starting school:

- 4 - DPT/DTaP: Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis
- 3 - IPV: Inactive Polio Vaccine
- 1 - MMR: Measles, Mumps, and Rubella
- 4 - Hib: Haemophilus b Conjugate Vaccine
- 3 – HepB: Hepatitis B
- 1 – Varicella

Drop Off Service: Procedures – Required for all participants

For the safety and care of the children enrolled in our programs, please follow the guidelines listed below for arrival at preschool.

- Hunt Club: drop off takes place east to west (left to right) in front of the building
- Viking Park: drop off takes place counter clockwise in the circle drive
- Drop off will begin 10 minutes before class begins.
- Please do not pull up to the front of the building until your drop off time
- Cell phone use is prohibited during drop off.
- **Parents may not enter the building.**
- Your child must be ready to walk into the building with the preschool staff.
- A staff member will approach your vehicle to have you sign stating that your child is well and can attend school.
- Please use your own pen
- **Once signed in, parents will be responsible for unbuckling their child, putting their backpack on and helping them out of the car.**
- If your child can unbuckle independently, we will open the car door for them to get out
- Teachers and staff will be in the drop off area and at the entrance to the building to make sure all children safely join their group
- Once your child has been dropped off, exit to allow room for the next vehicles to pull forward. Should you need to discuss a matter at length with the teacher, please call, email or write a note so that we can keep the flow of traffic moving.
- If you are late, park in the parking lot and escort your child to the preschool entrance and call your child's classroom (numbers are on page 3). A teacher will have to leave the classroom to get your child.
- Arriving late is difficult for your child and the teachers and creates a distraction for the other children in the class.

Drop Off Service: Procedures During Inclement/Extreme Weather

The safety of our teaching staff is of utmost importance. Please note the procedures below.

- If the lightening detector (Thorguard) is active, the teachers will not be able to remain outside and provide drop off service. A sign will be placed as you enter the complex

notifying you that there is modified drop off. We recommend that you remain in your vehicle until the storm passes.

- Drop off service will be modified if the temperature **and/or** wind chill is zero degrees or below on Weather.com at the time of drop off and at the location of each community center.
- A sign will be placed as you enter the complex notifying you.
- The teachers will stay at the preschool entrances of each building. You may drop off your child in the normal drop off location in view of the teachers who will make sure that your child gets into the building safely. Using this method, no one is outdoors in dangerous temperatures/wind chills for prolonged periods of time.

New Pick Up Procedure for 2020-2021

Only those persons authorized on the ePact Information Form, who are over 18 years old, will be allowed to pick up your child. Children must be signed out daily. We will not release your child to anyone you have not authorized on your ePact account. If you have a friend/relative in town who will be picking up, you must add them to your ePact authorized pick up list. The individual signing out must show proper identification. If you participate in a car pool, please authorize those parents on your child's ePact account.

Pick up times will be staggered and pick up will take place in the same manner as drop off.

Please do not enter the pick-up line before your scheduled time. Your child's teachers will hold up a sign with your class color (see below). If you arrive prior to your designated pick up time please wait in a parking space in the parking lot and pull forward when you see the color sign.

Viking Park

11:30 at the exterior door to classroom #1

1:00p at the exterior door to classroom #1

Hunt Club - A schedule for each room will be provided before school begins

Between 11:45a-11:50 Preschool Room #4 – purple

11:50-11:55a Preschool Room #2 – MWF yellow, T/Th red

11:55a-12:00p Preschool Room #1 – green

3:00p – Preschool Room #3 - blue

Late Pick Up Policy

Please be prompt at pick up time. Your child is expecting you and the anxiety of waiting can be distressing. Also, the teachers need this time to prepare for the next class and eat lunch, or the room may be used for another class, a staff meeting or a conference. We understand that in rare instances emergencies may cause delays, so please call the appropriate number listed on page 4 to notify us. Your consideration is appreciated. A warning will be issued at the time of the first late pick up. Thereafter, you will be charged a \$10.00 late fee for every 1-15 minutes that you or your authorized pick up person is late. Repeated late pick ups can result in dismissal from the program. Please park in the lot when dropping off or picking up late.

Discipline

1-2-3 Magic model is used in our preschool classrooms and is a very useful and positive technique for preschool children. The environment in the classroom is developed so that children understand that everyone makes mistakes and acts inappropriately at times and the system is explained. Positive reinforcement is given to children engaged in appropriate and desirable behavior. Inappropriate or undesirable behavior is addressed simply in a soft voice with the first warning. If the behavior continues or is repeated, the child is prompted with a second warning. If the behavior occurs again, a consequence is given. The consequence can be different depending on the age of the child and the circumstances, and may include but is not limited to redirection or time out of an activity not to exceed the child's age.

Code of Conduct

Children are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior while participating in programs and activities. A positive approach to discipline for children, specifically 1-2-3 Magic will be used in the preschool classes. Children who have behaviors that impact their own safety or that of others which includes refusing to wear a mask or is unable remain physically distant when asked, who have behaviors that negatively affect the experience of others, use inappropriate language or actions, or who are physically violent or threatening may be dismissed from the program. The Gurnee Park District reserves the right to dismiss a participant whose behavior, or that of their parent, is inappropriate or endangers the safety of self or others, and/or negatively impacts the experience of others.

Class Calendar, Newsletter, Weekly Email, Classroom Email correspondence

Parents will receive a monthly calendar and newsletter printed double sided on one piece of paper. Both are also posted on the Park District website, www.gurneeparkdistrict.com under the "calendars" tab. On the last day your child's class meets for the week, you will receive an email recap of the week as well as reminders for the coming week and upcoming events. Teachers will be using ClassDojo and more information will be provided at the beginning of the school year.

Each classroom has its own email address through which electronic correspondence will take place. This email address will be provided to you at Meet the Teachers along with the specific times of the day when email will be read and responded to by the teachers. Email is intended for parents to be able to ask basic questions about upcoming classroom activities. Issues that are specific to your child can be discussed on the phone or in person but not via email.

Invitations at School

Nearly everyone at one point or another in their life has experienced what it feels like not to be invited to a special party or activity that everyone else seems to be planning to attend. To avoid this type of hurtful situation at preschool please mail/email invitations using the class list that will be provided at the beginning of the school year. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

Class Information Lists

Because of privacy concerns, we do not give out name, address, email and phone information for the students in our classes. However, if you check the appropriate box when completing your child's ePact form, you will authorize us to include your information on a list that will be distributed to all students in your child's class who have also authorized release of their information. We hope you will find this list helpful when contacting other families for play dates or mailing invitations to social events. Contacting families for solicitation of any kind is strictly prohibited.

Skill Assessments / Conferences

Skill assessment will take place throughout the school year and will be given to parents in written form in November and April encompassing the following areas: Large Motor, Fine Motor, Interpersonal, Work Habits, Self Help, Language/Listening, and Readiness Skills. Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held via Zoom in November, and by request at any other time during the school year. The first months of school are a period of adjustment for all.

Snack at School

At this time snack will not be served in preschool for health/safety reasons.

Please note: parents are not permitted to send in snack/food or other items from home to distribute to the class.

Emergency Closings

Go to www.gurneeparkdistrict.com to see if preschool is closed due to weather or other emergency circumstances. Information will be posted by 7:00 a.m. for morning classes, and 11:00 a.m. for afternoon classes. It is always your discretion that determines if your child will attend in bad weather.

You may also use the Rainout Line. Go to www.rainoutline.com/gurneeparkdistrict and click on Gurnee Park District and look for Emergency Closing Information. You will also find a link to this (water drop icon) on the footer of any of the Gurnee Park District webpages or search it by keyword on our website. To receive texts and notifications, you may download the Rainout Line App (free).

In the event that classes are cancelled, one day will be made up either on a previously scheduled day off (excluding winter and spring break), by extending the school day, or at the end of the school year.

No Class Dates - 2020-2021 School Year

September 7	Labor Day
October 9	No School
October 12	Columbus Day
November 3	Virtual Conference Day
November 25-27	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 21-January 4	Winter Break (school resumes 1/5/21)
January 18	Martin Luther King Day
February 15	President's Day
March 19	No School
March 22-26	Spring Break
April 2	No School

Last day of class for Tuesday/Thursday classes: May 13, 2021

Last day of class for Monday-Friday and Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes: May 14, 2021

Payment Policy

Participants will pay a \$75 non-refundable registration fee at the time of registration. The first tuition payment (September) is due on July 31. If registering after July 15, the \$75 registration fee and one tuition payment will be due at the time of registration and once paid are non-refundable. Subsequent payments are due on the 15th of each month beginning September 15 for the October tuition payment. Tuition is based on the **total number of days in the school year divided into nine equal installments and not on the number of school days in any month.** Tuition payments made after the 15th of the month are subject to a \$10 late fee. Failure to make a tuition payment will result in the removal of the child from the class. Tuition must be paid in full by April 15, 2021. If a child is withdrawn at any time during the school year the registration fee and paid tuition are non-refundable. Tuition is not pro-rated for partial month attendance.

Payment Procedures

Automatic Payment Accounts

Auto debit accounts do not receive an email statement until the 15th of the month when the credit card or ACH is debited.

Invoiced Accounts

Reminder statements are sent via email as a courtesy on the first of each month. Please check your spam or junk email. Monthly payments must be made on or before the 15th of each month. Payments can be made by mail, phone or online by logging on to your account at <https://register.gurneeparkdistrict.com>, selecting "my account" and "pay old balances."

- Teachers cannot accept tuition payments.
- All fees must be paid in full no later than April 15, 2021.
- Our Federal Tax ID Number is 36-2712925.
- Questions concerning billing? Call Kim McCormack at (847) 599-3751.

We're looking forward to a wonderful year with your child in preschool!