

Family Handbook

2026-2027



ODC Network
Early Childhood Network

A note for our families,

Welcome to ODC Network.

ODC Network is a nonprofit organization advancing outdoor education and conservation across West Michigan. Through nature preserves, trails, community programs, conservation initiatives, and our Early Childhood programs, we create meaningful experiences that help people and nature thrive.

Our Discovery Preschools are one of the many ways we bring this mission to life. Since opening our first preschool in 2013, we've been committed to creating exceptional early learning experiences rooted in what children need most: meaningful relationships, hands-on exploration, unhurried play, and daily experiences in nature.

Here, the outdoors is more than a place to play—it's an essential part of how children learn. Through exploration in every season, children build confidence, resilience, curiosity, creativity, and a lifelong connection to the natural world.

Your family's connection to ODC doesn't end at preschool. We hope you'll enjoy our trails, participate in family programs and events, and experience all the ways ODC connects people with nature throughout the year.

We're honored you've chosen to be part of our community and look forward to partnering with your family throughout the year.



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Section 01

Our mission, philosophy & program

What we believe about young children, and how those beliefs shape every day at our Discovery Preschools.

OUR MISSION

To provide a high-quality early childhood experience that supports children in becoming active, independent learners with a lifelong connection to the natural world.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe children are capable, curious learners who grow through exploration, play, and meaningful relationships.



Our teaching staff supports early learning by:

- Providing a natural environment that encourages discovery, experimentation, and problem-solving
- Offering consistent opportunities for outdoor learning and exploration in all seasons
- Supporting the development of the whole child — social, emotional, physical, and cognitive
- Building on each child's individual interests, strengths, and abilities
- Encouraging children to ask questions, share ideas, and reflect on their experiences
- Supporting positive interactions and cooperation with others
- Respecting and valuing each child and family

PROGRAM & FACILITY OVERVIEW

Our Discovery Preschools are designed to support active, hands-on learning in both indoor and outdoor environments. Classrooms include open-ended materials that encourage creativity, problem-solving, and cooperative play.

Each class is led by a team of three teaching staff and enrolls up to 18 children. This structure allows for strong relationships, consistent support, and active supervision throughout the day.

Children regularly access outdoor learning spaces, including on-site natural areas and nearby ecosystems. These spaces are an extension of the classroom and are used daily for exploration, movement, and learning. In addition, children may engage with ODC naturalists and experience visits with live animals as part of the program.

Section 02

Our Program

A look inside the school day, from learning through play and daily hikes to curriculum, animals, and celebrations.

OUR PROGRAM

Learning Through Play

Play is a vital part of a child's social, emotional, language, physical, and cognitive growth during the preschool years. Children learn best through play- it's their work!

When you visit an ODC location you will see the children engaged in many different kinds of play:

- A child working hard to put a puzzle together may be learning how to problem solve and enhance their fine motor skills.
- Children playing a game together are learning to take turns and cooperate. They are developing language skills in communicating the rules to one another.
- A child climbing and using natural materials to build is building their large motor skills and using creativity.

Attending our program is a great opportunity for your child to experience various forms of play. Whether alone or in a group, your child's learning is fostered when there is a connection to something that interests them. We invite you to visit your child's learning environment and witness children learning through play each and every day!

Outdoor Exploration and Daily Hikes

Outdoor exploration is a regular part of the daily experience. Children spend time in natural areas beyond the immediate school space, including nearby trails and ecosystems.

These experiences are an extension of the classroom and support learning through movement, observation, and exploration in the natural world.

Teaching staff carry communication devices during outdoor exploration to ensure safety and communication in case of emergency.



Risky Play

Our programs are rooted in a nature-based approach that prioritizes meaningful outdoor experiences for young children. Through daily engagement with the natural world, children participate in learning that supports their physical health, emotional well-being, resilience, and ability to think critically and solve problems.

Research consistently demonstrates that outdoor play, including experiences that involve an element of risk, contributes to stronger developmental outcomes. When children are given opportunities to climb, explore uneven terrain, use tools, or engage with natural elements such as water and fire in a supervised environment, they build confidence, develop sound judgment, and strengthen their ability to assess and navigate challenges.

At ODC, we believe that risk is an essential and valuable part of learning. We do not aim to eliminate risk. Rather, we work to manage it intentionally.

It is important to distinguish between risk and hazard:

- Risk refers to a challenge that a child can recognize and learn to navigate, offering developmental benefit.
- Hazard refers to a source of harm that is not obvious or developmentally appropriate for a child to manage.

Our approach focuses on minimizing hazards while allowing for developmentally appropriate risk. This balance is what makes nature-based learning both safe and impactful.

Children in our programs regularly experience a wide range of outdoor conditions, including heat, cold, rain, snow, mud, and uneven terrain. They may also engage in supervised risky play such as climbing, tool use, fire building, and exploration near water. These experiences are intentionally designed and supported by trained staff to ensure that children are both safe and meaningfully challenged.

The State of Michigan's Child Care Licensing Division recognizes and supports nature-based programming. As part of this recognition, families are informed of both the benefits and the potential risks associated with participation. ODC Network requires families to review and sign a Nature-Based Education: Risks and Benefits Waiver, acknowledging their understanding of this approach. In addition, families receive ongoing communication and resources that further explain how risk is managed within our programs.

A Typical Day

A predictable routine helps children understand what comes next and feel more confident in their day. At the same time, we value spontaneous learning opportunities and teachable moments that arise in nature. See below for an example part day and full day routine.

Our routine remains consistent but the location of learning is flexible and shifts between three locations:

- Inside the classroom
- Outside in our outdoor learning areas
- The Beyond, the area beyond the fence that includes daily hikes and exploration of local natural spaces and ecosystems

Part Day

- Arrival, 8:40-8:50am:
 - Families drop off their child, and care transitions to the teaching team.
- Outdoor Choice Time, 8:40-9:40am:
 - Students enjoy an hour of uninterrupted play and exploration. Teachers come alongside students in their play.
- Clean-up, 9:40-9:45am
 - Students and teachers work together to put away and care for materials.
- Snack, 9:45-10am
 - A healthy snack is served daily, with students and teachers sitting together for conversation. Dietary restrictions and allergies are accommodated.
- Large Group Meeting, 10am-10:15am
 - The class gathers for music and movement, read alouds, songs and chants, and skill-building games. Students are encouraged to share ideas and contribute.
- Hike, 10:15-11:10am
 - The class hikes daily into the natural areas surrounding the school, with conversation, teamwork, movement, stories, and group explorations along the way.
- Small Group, 11:10-11:30am
 - Small group activities offer targeted instruction in social-emotional and academic skills, often led by student interests.
- End-of-Day, 11:30am
 - Teachers share moments they noticed students being safe, helpful, or explorers. The class says the goodbye chant together, and students are released one by one as a teacher calls their name.

Full Day

- Arrival, 8:20-8:30am:
 - Families drop off their child, and care transitions to the teaching team.
- Outdoor Choice Time, 8:30-9:40am
 - Students enjoy an hour of uninterrupted play and exploration. Teachers come alongside students in their play.
- Clean-up, 9:40-9:45am
 - Students and teachers work together to put away and care for materials.
- Snack, 9:45-10:10am
 - A healthy snack is served daily, with students and teachers sitting together for conversation. Dietary restrictions and allergies are accommodated.
- Large Group Meeting, 10:10am-10:30am
 - The class gathers for music and movement, read alouds, songs and chants, and skill-building games. Students are encouraged to share ideas and contribute.
- Hike, 10:30am-11:45am
 - The class hikes daily into the natural areas surrounding the school, with conversation, teamwork, movement, stories, and group explorations along the way.
- Lunch, 12-12:30pm
 - Students and teachers eat lunch together and engage in conversation.
- Rest Time, 12:30-1:45pm
 - Students nap or rest quietly on their cot with books or fidgets.
- Small Group, 1:45-
 - Small group activities offer targeted instruction in social-emotional and academic skills, often led by student interests.
- End-of-Day, 3:30pm
 - Teachers share moments they noticed students being safe, helpful, or explorers. The class says the goodbye chant together, and students are released one by one as a teacher calls their name.

Outdoor Clothing, Apparel & Equipment

Nature-based learning is messy! Children learn by doing, including digging, splashing, climbing, and exploring, so we expect them to get muddy, grass-stained, and wet. The right clothing helps them participate comfortably and confidently.

Please dress your child for messy, outdoor play every day. We are outside in all kinds of weather, often 50–100% of the day. Check the hourly forecast each morning and dress your child in weather-appropriate layers to help them stay comfortable.

Because learning through doing can be messy, send an extra set (or two) of clothing in your child's backpack. Children also need comfortable, closed-toe outdoor shoes and a pair of indoor shoes (not slippers) they can put on independently.

For families new to this climate or to all-weather outdoor learning, know that children are always supported in staying warm, dry, and happy. If your family needs outdoor gear, please reach out—we never want gear to be a barrier. Families are also welcome to support our Gear Library through donations. Rain suits are available to rent or may be purchased independently.

What Your Child Needs Daily:

Note: Label everything with child's first and last name



- Backpack



- Water Bottle (labeled with child's first and last name)



- Spare clothing, including underwear



- Inside Shoes (Crocs/slip ons)



- Extra mittens (Seasonally)



Small pillow, blanket, stuffed animal, fitted crib size sheet (Full Day Only)



Outdoor Clothing, Apparel & Equipment

Gear Chart

Fall & Spring (Generally temp above 70 degrees)	Fall & Spring (Generally temp between 40-60 degrees)	Winter (Generally temp between 33-50 degrees)
- Sun Hat - Sunscreen & Bug Spray as needed (Applied before class)  	- Fleece jacket - Insulated, waterproof mittens - Good Brands include: Didriksons, Duoyeree (Amazon), Outdoor School Shop: Polarn O. Pyret) - Lightweight mittens or gloves (for outdoor snack time) - Hat 	- Base layer top and bottom (long underwear) - Mid layer top and bottom - Insulated, <u>waterproof</u> mittens. Long cuff mittens work best. - Lightweight mittens or gloves (for outdoor snack time) - Balaclava or neck gaiter - Hat - Vaseline 
- T-Shirt - Shorts or Pants - Long sleeve shirt for layering 	- Rain jacket with hood and rain pants  - OR one piece rain suit  <u>Brands:</u> Next, Oaki, Cuddle Club Kids, Jan & Jull,	- Warm, Water Resistant winter coat - Snow pants  - OR one piece snowsuit  <u>Brands:</u> Columbia, Mountain Warehouse, LL Bean,
Shoes or closed toed sandals that are okay to get wet 	Waterproof boots  Tennis shoes /hiking boots  Wool socks 	Insulated, waterproof boots (no rain boots)  Wool/fleece socks 

Curriculum

Our programs use research-supported, comprehensive early childhood and environmental education curricula that nurtures the whole child, including social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth. The social-emotional foundation of our curriculum supports the development of early literacy, math, and cognitive skills, all of which are intentionally incorporated through authentic experiences in local nature. Teaching staff use Creative Curriculum® for Preschool as a framework to develop nature-based studies that stem from children's interests. This curriculum is recognized in Michigan as a high-quality approach that supports school-readiness.

Within this framework, our programs emphasize a nature-based approach grounded in child-led inquiry and real-life outdoor experiences. Teaching staff follow children's interests and intentionally integrate the local natural world into all areas of learning. Children spend significant time outdoors each day in both structured and self-directed exploration. Teaching staff model care for the local environment, highlight seasonal changes, and nurture curiosity, stewardship, and observation skills.

An example of how student interest guides our curriculum may begin with children discovering animal tracks on a hike. Their curiosity becomes the foundation for deeper learning. Children may hear a story about animal tracks, practice classification by matching the tracks they found to picture cards, measure tracks along the trail, and take turns using track stamps during an art project. These hands-on experiences blend academic learning with meaningful outdoor exploration, helping children build skills and understanding in ways that are engaging, developmentally appropriate, and connected to the natural world.



Engagement with Animals

Animals play an important role in our curriculum. During hikes, children may encounter wild animals such as frogs, snakes, and fish. Our Early Childhood Naturalist also brings in ambassador animals from ODC, including mammals and birds of prey, for educational experiences.

If you prefer that your child not interact with animals, please contact your child's Lead Teacher. All children will wash their hands after touching any learning environment animal.

All learning environment animal tanks and bedding are regularly cleaned and monitored by our Early Childhood Naturalist and the ODC's Animal Care Experts. Please inform your child's teacher of any allergies or concerns.

For everyone's safety and comfort, please do not bring pets during drop-off or pick-up times.



Section 03

Enrollment & Tuition

How to enroll, what tuition looks like, and the ways we work to help make preschool more affordable for families.

ENROLLMENT & TUITION

Age Eligibility Policy

Age eligibility is based on your child's birthday. Use the chart below to find which classroom options are available to your family.

Your Child's Birthday	Classroom Options
Turns 4 on or before September 1	4-year-old classroom
Turns 4 between September 2 and December 1	Your choice: 3-year-old or 4-year-old classroom
Turns 3 on or before September 1	3-year-old classroom

A note on GSRP enrollment flexibility:

Turning 4 between September 2 and December 1? You have a choice. Your child can enroll in either our 3-year-old or 4-year-old programs. Some families choose the 4-year-old program because it opens the door to Young 5s the following year. And if Young 5s ends up not being the right fit, your child would still be eligible for a second year of GSRP.

This decision belongs to your family. We encourage you to think about your child's individual development and which environment will best set them up for success, and we're always happy to talk it through with you.

Enrollment Policy:

To enroll your age eligible child, you will need to register online and pay an \$85 registration fee. This registration fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.

If you withdraw your child after registration is complete, the registration fee is not refunded. Enrollment in tuition-based sessions will be based on the date and time that registrations were completed.

2026/2027 Sessions & Tuition

3 Year Old Sessions:

M/W Morning, 8:50-11:50am - \$3,200

T/Th Morning, 8:50-11:50am - \$3,200

M/W/F Morning, 8:45-11:45am - \$4,500

M/T/W/Th Full Day, 8:30-3:30pm - \$10,000

4 Year Old Sessions:

No cost when participating in GSRP

M,T,W,Th Full Day, 8:30-3:30pm - \$10,000

M,T,W,Th Morning, 8:50-11:50am - \$5,500

M,T,W,Th Afternoon, 12:50-3:50pm - \$5,500

Payment Schedule and Options:

Tuition may be paid in one payment for the whole year, in two payments at the beginning of each semester, or in eight monthly payments September–April at the beginning of each month. Tuition is billed through our online parent portal and can be paid via ACH transaction, credit card, debit card, or check. Tuition is still required on snow days, and when a child is ill or on vacation; no reimbursement is provided for missed days.

If you are unable to make your monthly tuition payment and fall behind, please reach out to the school office about updating your payment plan.

We want to work with families to fulfill their tuition agreements or set up assistance as needed. In the case that a family falls behind, alternate payment plans can be made with the school office. If tuition is not paid, children can be removed from the program.

Tuition is charged based on the class session the child is enrolled in and is due regardless of illness, attendance, or center closures.



WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Parent-Initiated Withdrawal

If a parent or guardian decides to withdraw their child from the preschool program, they must provide written notice to the Site Director. The notice should include the child's name, the intended last day of attendance, and the reason for withdrawal, if the family wishes to provide one. Tuition for the semester in which the child is withdrawn remains due in full. Tuition will not be prorated or refunded based on the child's withdrawal date. Any tuition or fees due through the child's final day of care must be paid in full.

ODC-Initiated Withdrawal

ODC is committed to supporting each child's growth and success within our nature-based preschool community. In rare circumstances, ODC may determine that continued enrollment is not in the best interest of the child, other children, or the preschool community. This decision is made carefully and only when other approaches have not resolved the concern.

ODC values partnership with families. When concerns arise, we work collaboratively with parents and guardians to develop strategies and support the child's success. Withdrawal is considered only when:

- The necessary family partnership and supports cannot be established to safely meet the child's developmental and behavioral needs within the program
- Nonpayment of tuition or fees, including failure to meet agreed-upon payment arrangements
- A parent's or guardian's conduct is threatening, abusive, disrespectful, or otherwise disruptive to staff, children, or the preschool community
- A safety concern exists that ODC cannot adequately address within available resources and program structure
- Required documentation or information necessary for the child to participate safely in the program is not provided

When possible, ODC will communicate concerns with the parent or guardian and work together to find solutions before making the decision to withdraw a child. However, ODC may require immediate withdrawal when circumstances involve a safety concern or other situation that requires immediate action.

If ODC initiates a withdrawal, the parent or guardian will be notified of the decision and provided with the child's final day of care. Any outstanding tuition or fees remain the responsibility of the parent or guardian in accordance with ODC's tuition policies.

Required Forms Upon Enrollment

Upon enrollment, families will be required to complete and return the following forms:

Child Information Record, Health Appraisal, Immunization Record, Written Information Packet Documentation, Permission for Photos/Videos, Permission for Walking Field Trips, Authorization for Application for Sunscreen & Bug Spray, Authorization for Application of Lotion/Tecnu, Nature-Based Education Risks & Benefits Wavier,



Transportation:

Transportation is available for GSRP students enrolled in either full day or half day classes. Transportation is prioritized based on need.



Scholarships, Tuition Assistance & GSRP

We believe every family should have access to nature-based preschool, and we work hard to reduce financial barriers wherever we can. Here's how we can help:

- Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP):
 - While GSRP provides a tuition-free experience for 4-year-olds enrolled in 4 day/week half and full day classes, please note that our programming, curriculum, and classroom experience remain consistent across all programs, whether funded by GSRP or not. Historically, eligibility for GSRP was determined by income and risk factors. However, under the PreK for All initiative, all families are eligible, regardless of income and risk factors.
- ODC Scholarship Fund:
 - For 3-year-olds and families not eligible for GSRP, ODC offers privately funded scholarships based on household income. These scholarships can cover 10-50% of tuition and are awarded in August before the school year begins.
- Ready for School Scholarships:
 - For 3-year-old students who reside in Holland, Hamilton and Zeeland. Scholarships are based on household income. Families may be eligible for up to \$900 toward the cost of tuition.

How to Apply:

- To apply for GSRP, or a Ready for School or ODC Scholarship, complete the [Michigan Early Childhood Connect Application](#).

GSRP will not require income documentation to be uploaded, however you must self-report your annual household income on your MiECC application.

Ready for School and ODC Scholarships do require income documentation to be submitted.

Upload one of the following forms of income documentation to complete your scholarship application:

- Previous Year W-2 forms
- Previous Year Tax Return (social security numbers redacted)
- If annual documents are unavailable, then the last four paystubs for all working household members can be accepted

Section 04

Daily Life at School

The everyday details that keep things running smoothly, from attendance and drop-off to gear and snacks.

DAILY LIFE AT SCHOOL

Attendance

Regular attendance is crucial to your child's academic and social success in school. It supports your child's ability to build relationships, feel comfortable in the classroom, and fully participate in daily learning experiences. When a child has frequent absences, a child may feel uncomfortable in school because he/she may not know the songs, activities, routine, or may have difficulty maintaining friendships.

It is the parent/caregiver's responsibility to communicate with our staff if their child will be absent or arriving late. Please notify your child's teacher by 8:00 a.m. using the designated communication platform or email and include the reason for the absence.

If a child has frequent absences, teaching staff or a Site Director may reach out to better understand the situation and work with the family to support consistent attendance



Illness

Regular attendance is important, but there are times when children should remain home to support their own health and the well-being of others.

Please keep your child home if they are not feeling well or if they have any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Persistent cough
- Unusual fatigue or discomfort that limits participation
- Signs of a contagious illness

Children must be symptom free for at least 24 hours without medication before returning to school.

Staff and volunteers follow these same guidelines and will not attend if they are experiencing these symptoms.

If your child becomes ill while at school, you will be contacted and asked to pick them up. Children must be picked up within one hour of notification.

Please inform teaching staff if your child has been diagnosed with or exposed to a contagious illness. This helps us maintain a healthy environment for all children and staff.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

A consistent drop-off and pick-up routine helps children feel secure and supports a smooth transition between home and school.

All children must be signed in and out each day using the designated electronic system. At drop-off, please share any important information with teaching staff, including health updates, schedule changes, or pick-up plans. Teaching staff will support your child in transitioning into the day.

Authorized Pick-Up

Children may only be released to adults listed as authorized on the Child Information Record. Photo identification may be required at pick-up.

If someone new will be picking up your child, please notify the office in advance with the individual's name. That person must bring photo identification at the time of pick-up.



Late Pick Up Fee

We understand that delays can happen. However, children must be picked up on time, and a late pick-up fee will be charged when pick-up occurs after the scheduled end of the program day.

A 10-minute grace period is provided after the scheduled pick-up time. After this time, late fees will be applied as follows:

- 1st occurrence: \$5.00
- 2nd occurrence: \$10.00
- 3rd occurrence: \$20.00
- 4th occurrence and beyond: \$50.00

If a child is picked up more than 30 minutes after the scheduled end time, a \$50.00 fee will be charged, regardless of prior occurrences.

Timely pick-up supports a smooth transition for staff as they prepare for the next class, take required breaks, and attend meetings and training. We appreciate your cooperation in picking up your child on time.

Snack and Food Service

Meals and snacks are served family-style and will include healthy choices such as fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Milk and water are provided to drink.

No items are cooked at the preschool. Raw fruits and vegetables will be thoroughly washed before being served. Items stored in the refrigerator will be labeled with the date the item is placed in the refrigerator. Staff and volunteers will wash hands and wear food grade gloves when serving or preparing snacks. All tableware, utensils, food contact surfaces and equipment will be thoroughly washed, rinsed and sanitized after each use. Tables will be thoroughly washed, rinsed and sanitized before and after they are used for snacks. Multi-use tableware and utensils will be washed, rinsed and sanitized in a dishwasher after each use.

Lunch is provided by West Ottawa Public Schools Food Service Department.

The monthly meal and snack calendar is posted and shared with parents. Please communicate any food allergies your child may have to the office, in writing, including an allergy action plan from your child's physician.

All participants are served the same meals at no separate charge, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and there is no discrimination in the course of the food service.

Sunscreen and Bug Spray

Parents are responsible for applying sunscreen or bug spray before children are dropped off at preschool. Students in the full-day program require a signed parent permission slip in order for staff to reapply sunscreen and bug spray after lunch.



Photos and Videos

ODC Network staff may take photos and videos throughout the program year to document children's experiences and support communication with families.

At enrollment, families complete a Photo and Video Permission form to indicate how their child's image may be used. Options may include use within classroom communication tools, such as Procure, use in program materials such as newsletters, websites, or social media, or no use of photos or videos.

Teaching staff follow each family's selected preferences and ensure that photos and videos are used respectfully and appropriately. Children's names are not used in public-facing materials.

Photos and videos shared through classroom communication platforms may include multiple children and are intended only for families within that classroom community. Please do not download or share these images with others — including on social media — out of respect for the privacy of all children pictured.

Families who choose not to provide permission understand that they will not receive photo or video updates of their child.

To protect the privacy of all children, parents and caregivers may not take photos or videos of other children during program activities without permission.

Holidays and Birthdays

Our programs do not celebrate holidays in the traditional sense. Instead, we focus on seasonal changes and events in the natural world.

For example, children may observe seasonal transitions such as the winter solstice through simple classroom experiences.

Birthdays are acknowledged within the classroom community. To support the health and safety of all children, birthday treats and gifts are not permitted.



Section 05

Health and Safety

How we support children's health and safety every day, and how we prepare for the unexpected.

Health & Safety

Health Care Plan

Licensing regulations require that we share our Health Care Plan with families. This plan outlines how we help prevent illness and maintain a healthy environment for children and staff.

Illnesses can spread in group settings through contact with germs, including:

- Body fluids (such as saliva, nasal discharge, or blood)
- Human waste
- Direct contact with others
- Contaminated surfaces or objects
- Airborne droplets from coughing or sneezing

Because people can spread illness even before showing symptoms, staff follow consistent hygiene and sanitation practices throughout the day.

Handwashing: Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness. Staff and children wash their hands regularly, including:

- Upon arrival
- Before and after eating or handling food
- After using the restroom
- After outdoor play or handling animals
- After contact with bodily fluids
- After sneezing, coughing, or blowing their nose
- When hands are visibly dirty

Handwashing steps include:

- Wet hands and apply soap
- Rub for at least 15 seconds, including between fingers and under nails
- Rinse thoroughly
- Dry with a disposable towel
- Use the towel to turn off the faucet

Teachers support children in learning proper handwashing routines.

Health Care Plan (Continued)

Handling Bodily Fluids: Staff use universal precautions when handling blood or other bodily fluids.

- Gloves are worn when needed
- Hands are washed after contact
- Surfaces and materials are cleaned and disinfected promptly

If exposure occurs, the affected area is cleaned immediately and appropriate follow-up steps are taken.

Cleaning and Sanitizing: We regularly clean and sanitize materials, equipment, and surfaces to reduce the spread of illness.

We follow a three-step process:

- Wash: Clean with soap and water
- Rinse: Remove soap with clean water
- Sanitize: Apply a sanitizing solution (such as a bleach solution)

Cleaning happens daily and as needed, especially when items are soiled or after contact with bodily fluids.

Injury Notification

Teachers will complete an “Incident Report” in Procure to document minor injuries (such as skinned knees or small bumps). These forms are reviewed by parents and the Site Director. For any substantial head or face injury, or any injury that may require medical care, families will receive a phone call right away so they are informed immediately.

Immunizations

Students must be up to date on vaccinations at the time of enrollment. An official immunization record is required for enrollment. If you have chosen to waive vaccinations for your child, you must obtain an immunization waiver from your county’s health department.

If you have chosen to waive vaccinations for your child and there is an outbreak or report of a vaccine preventable disease in our school or community, your child may be required to stay out of school. This could be for 21 days or longer. Time out of school depends on multiple factors, including the disease, incubation period, means of spread, and the nature of the outbreak. You are still responsible to fulfill your tuition agreement and make any payments due during this time.

Health & Safety

Medication and Health Services

No medication shall be given at our programs except on written order by the child's doctor.

Parents/Caregivers must also complete the "Medication Permission and Instructions" Form (updated annually if medication is given on an ongoing basis). The medication will be stored according to the label instructions and in the original container. The container MUST have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name, child's name, instructions, and name and strength of the medication. All medication is to be stored out of the reach of children and returned to the child's parent or destroyed when the parent determines it is no longer needed or it has expired.

All medication is to be given according to the label directions. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the American Academy of Pediatrics have both recommended that cold and cough medications NOT be used with children under 6. It is for this reason that we require a written order from the child's physician prior to administering any medications.

Pest Management

Our sites follow state licensing requirements to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment, including pest management practices.

If pest treatment is necessary, families will be notified in advance by email and through a posted notice in a public, common area of the building. Notifications will include the type of pest, location of treatment, and date of application.

Pesticides are applied only when needed, in targeted areas, and outside of program hours. Children will not return to treated areas until it is safe to do so, based on the product's recommended guidelines. In most cases, treatments are scheduled at the end of the week to allow additional time before children return.



Weather Conditions & Snow Days

Our sites do not follow a strict temperature cutoff like many school districts. We believe children can adapt to winter weather when dressed appropriately.

Children go outside daily as long as temperatures are above zero and wind conditions are safe. When wind chill is below zero, staff closely monitor children and may shorten outdoor time. The National Weather Service Wind Chill Chart is used to help guide safe outdoor durations. Our goal is always a safe, positive outdoor learning experience.

For weather-related closures, each site typically follows its local public school district. Dragonflies Discovery Preschool follows West Ottawa Public Schools for weather related delays and closings. If the district is closed due to weather, preschool is also closed.

In some cases, the local school district may be closed for a non-weather reason (such as a professional development day). If severe weather occurs on those days, the district may not issue a closure. In these situations, the preschool will make an independent decision about whether to remain open. Families should expect the preschool to be open unless otherwise communicated.

If there is a two-hour delay:

- Full-day preschool begins two hours later
- Morning preschool is canceled
- Afternoon preschool runs as scheduled

Families will be notified by email as soon as possible when closures or delays are announced.



Severe Weather

Weather Conditions & Snow Days

The following procedures will be used in a severe weather situation:

Severe Thunderstorm Watch: A possibility of severe thunderstorms with high wind and hail in a defined area.

- Schools remain in session
- Parents may pick up their children if they wish

Severe Thunderstorm Warning: Severe thunderstorms are in process in the area.

- Schools remain in session
- Parents may pick up their children if they wish

Tornado Watch: A possibility of tornadoes in the area

- School will remain in session until normal time of dismissal
- Parents may pick up their children if they wish

Tornado Warning: Tornadoes reported in a defined area by local weather spotters

- Schools will remain in session and students will be sent to prearranged protected areas
- Teachers will remain with their students until released by the program director



Severe Weather Policy

Emergency Policies and Safety Drills

ODC staff are committed to providing a safe learning and work environment. Unfortunately, natural and man-made disasters do occur. Such emergencies are best met by preparedness and planning.

A system of emergency preparedness has been developed that addresses the following goals and/or objectives:

- The health and safety of students and staff are safeguarded.
- The time necessary for instructional purposes is not unduly diverted.
- Minimum disruption to the educational program occurs.
- Students are taught self-reliance and trained to respond sensibly to emergency situations.

All threats to the safety of our facilities shall be identified by appropriate personnel and responded to promptly in accordance with the plan for emergency preparedness. We shall conduct at least three evacuation/fire drills (fall, winter and spring), and two tornado drills between the months of March and November. Staff will practice lockdown drill procedures three times per year at a time when children are not present.

Emergency procedures for fire, tornado, serious accident or injury are posted on the parent bulletin boards. If evacuation is required due to a natural or man-made disaster, parents will be notified of the event by phone and/or text message. The location and method for reuniting families will be included in the message. Students with special needs (such as mobility issues) will be assisted or accommodated according to individual plans determined by the staff and parents.



Health Related Resources

ODC Early Childhood may be involved with a wide variety of agencies in and around Allegan and Ottawa Counties. Information is shared and referrals are made to agencies such as:

- Michigan Early Childhood Connect – c/o Hamilton and Holland Area ISD Early Childhood Dept.
- Allegan and Ottawa County Health Departments
- Community Mental Health
- Child Protective Services
- Early On
- Early Head Start
- Love, INC
- Whole Family Connection
- United Way Resource Center for Ottawa and Allegan Counties: www.mi211.org or call 211: for free and confidential hotline that provides information and referrals open 24 hours.

Additional Information can be found at Ottawa County Resource Guide



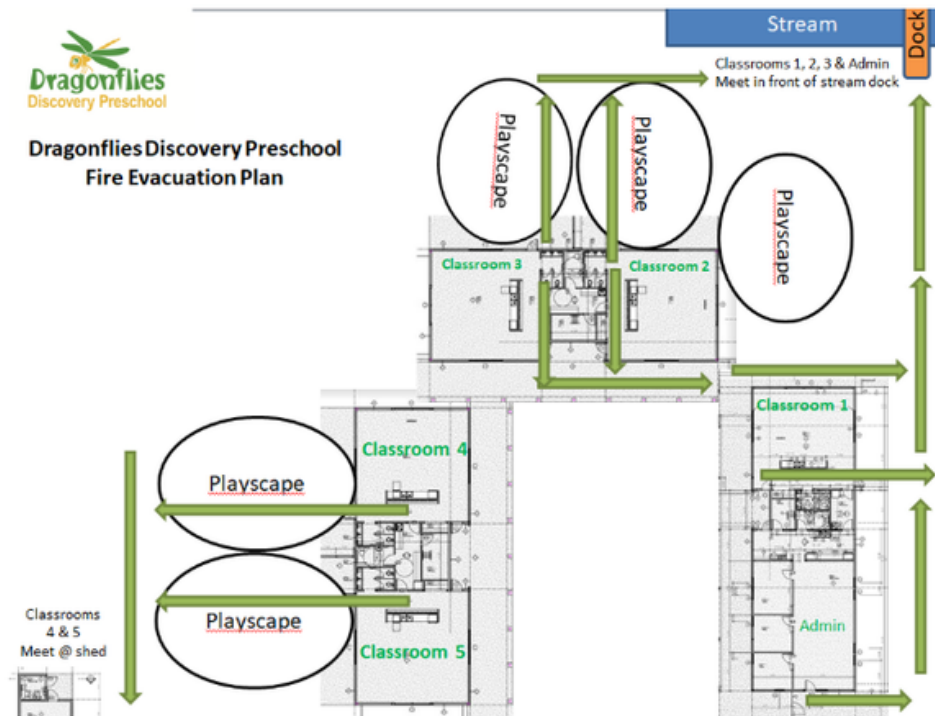
Emergency Procedures:

Below you will find an overview of Dragonflies' emergency procedures for fire, flood, tornado, and power outages. Additional emergency procedures related to extreme weather events, natural or man-made disasters, serious injuries or accidents, and bomb threats are available in the Dragonflies licensing binder located in the office. If you have questions about emergency response, please reach out to Dragonflies' Site Director.

Fire

- Meet at bridge that crosses stream to the north of building OR shared bathroom/shed outbuilding to the west depending on location.
 - Office and Classrooms 1, 2, & 3 will meet at bridge near wetland to the North
 - Classrooms 4 & 5 will meet at shed/bathroom to the West.
 - Any classes on hike will meet at either of these safety locations, whichever is closest to their hike location.
 - Children with mobility issues will be carried and/or placed in a wagon to exit the building in a timely manner.
 - Children with special needs will be provided visual supports in the case of a fire to help children understand the expectations and procedures.
- In the case of a fire the automatic fire alarm system will sound and 911 will be automatically called by the fire alarm system. If the fire occurs outside the building, Office Staff will manually sound the fire alarm by pushing the button and calling 911.
- Classroom teachers will:
 - Take all children, attendance record folders with child information cards, and first aid kit backpack to the above meeting place.
 - If not in the emergency bag, bring all food allergy plans and emergency medications to the above meeting place and help keep children calm and quiet.
 - Take attendance to account for all children when leaving and arriving at the designated meeting place.
 - Walkie office (Channel 6) when in designated meeting place; confirm with office if all students are present.
- Once Office Staff assures all children and adults have been evacuated, classroom teachers will walk to Evacuation Location: Park Township Offices to East, 52 152nd Ave. Teachers will bring books and games to continue programming.
- Office Staff will send a Procure Message to families notifying them of the emergency and plans for pick-up or relocation if necessary.
- Plan for continuity of operations: Services will resume once the building is determined safe for occupancy by appropriate authorities.
- Children with special needs and/or chronic medical conditions will have an individualized emergency plan (including who will help the child and any accommodations that may be needed for that child) posted with the above information.

Emergency Procedures



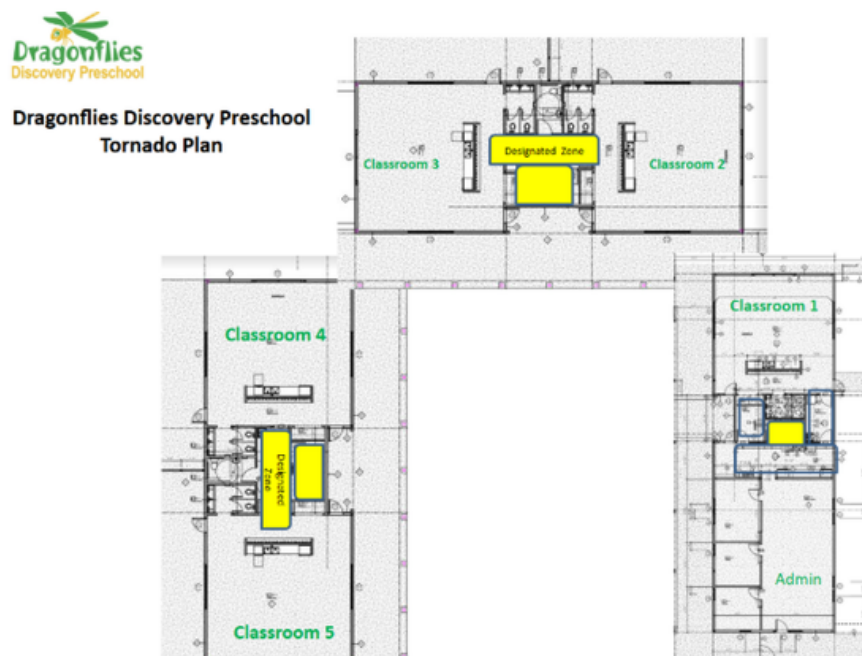
Flood

- Shelter in place location: Classrooms
- Evacuation Location: Park Township Offices (52 152nd Ave. Holland)
- Office team will determine if closure or immediate evacuation is necessary and contact emergency personnel, if needed.
- If evacuation is necessary classroom teachers will:
- Take all children, child information cards, attendance records, and first aid kit to the appropriate above location.
- Take attendance to account for all children.
- Walkie the Office Team once they are in their designated shelter location and all children are accounted for.
- If children are unaccounted for Office Staff will check center for children - bathrooms, closets, under furniture, behind curtains, etc.
- Office Staff will send a Procure Message to families notifying them of the emergency and plans for pick-up or relocation if necessary.
- Plan for continuity of operations: Services will resume once the building is determined safe for occupancy by appropriate authorities.
- Children with special needs and/or chronic medical conditions will have an individualized emergency plan (including who will help the child and any accommodations that may be needed for that child) posted with the above information.

Emergency Procedures

Tornado

- Children will be taken to teacher work space and/or bathrooms in the middle of the building.
- Classroom teachers will:
 - Take all children, child information cards, attendance records, and first aid kit to the above location.
 - Take attendance to account for all children before moving to the designated shelter location and upon arrival.
 - If not in the emergency backpack, bring all food allergy plans and emergency medications, along with a radio or phone for monitoring, to above meeting place and help keep children calm and quiet.
 - Walkie the Office Team once they are in their designated shelter location and all children are accounted for.
 - If children are unaccounted for, Office Staff will check center for children - bathrooms, closets, under furniture, behind curtains, etc.
- Relocation Site if necessary: Park Township Offices (52 152nd Ave. Holland, MI)
- Office Staff will send a Procure Message to families notifying them of the emergency and plans for pick-up or relocation if necessary.
- Plan for continuity of operations: Services will resume once the building is determined safe for occupancy by appropriate authorities.
- Children with special needs and/or chronic medical conditions will have an individualized emergency plan (including who will help the child and any accommodations that may be needed for that child) posted with the above information.



Emergency Procedures

Power Outage

- Office staff will check the circuit breaker and contact power company to determine if problem is wide-spread or localized. The office team will also check the generator if it is not currently working and will contact ODC Operations Department to inform them that the generator is broken.
- If restoration time is unknown or more than 1 hour, program admin/staff-in-charge will close the center and children must be picked up. Contact parents to inform them of pick up then contact parents of children scheduled to arrive to inform them not to come. Post notice on entrance door.
- Classroom Teachers will account for children and help them stay calm and will continue programming with books, songs, games, and/or play.
- Do not attempt to move children in complete darkness unless there is immediate danger.
- Designated meeting place, if needed: Park Township Offices (52 152nd Ave.)
- Plan for continuity of operations: Services will resume once the building is determined safe for occupancy by appropriate authorities and power is restored.
- Office Staff will send a Procure Message to families notifying them of the emergency and plans for pick-up or relocation if necessary.
- Children with special needs and/or chronic medical conditions will have an individualized emergency plan (including who will help the child and any accommodations that may be needed for that child) posted with the above information.

Evacuation

- Program Admin/Staff-in-Charge: Responsible for determining when an evacuation is necessary and communicating directives to all program staff.
- All Program Staff:
 - Follow all evacuation directives from the Program Admin/Staff-in-Charge immediately and calmly.
 - Evacuation Location: Park Township Offices (52 152nd Ave. Holland, MI)
 - Use attendance records to ensure every child is accounted for.
- Office Staff will send a Procure message to families notifying them of the emergency and providing instructions for pick-up or relocation if needed.
- Continuity of Operations: Program services will resume once the building is determined safe for occupancy by the appropriate authorities.
- Children with Special Needs or Chronic Medical Conditions: Each child will have an individualized emergency plan outlining who will assist them and any necessary accommodations during evacuation.

Section 06

Child Growth and Support

How we track your child's growth, support their development, and partner with you along the way.

CHILD GROWTH & SUPPORT

Developmental Screening

All families complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), a developmental screening tool, in September and March. The ASQ helps us better understand your child's development and identify areas of strength and growth.

For children enrolled in GSRP, results are discussed during home visits. For all other children, results are shared during teacher conferences. If additional individualized support is recommended based on ASQ results, we will partner with you to determine next steps and obtain your consent.

The ASQ is available to all families through the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District. The online version can be accessed here: [ASQ Online Questionnaire](#)

Child Assessment

Our programs use Teaching Strategies Gold® as our primary assessment tool. Teachers regularly collect developmental observations as evidence of each child's growth and progress. These observations are used to complete progress reports, which are shared with families during teacher conferences in November and February.

In our four-year-old classrooms, we also use the Preschool Early Literacy Indicators (PELI) to assess developing literacy skills and inform instruction. This assessment is administered three times per year, and results are shared with families during parent-teacher conferences.

For more information about Teaching Strategies Gold®, please visit: <https://teachingstrategies.com/the-objectives-for-development-and-learning/>

ODC Program Assessment

Our programs use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) to evaluate the quality of our learning environment. The Early Childhood Specialist team from the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District periodically observes classrooms, focusing on teacher-child interactions and best practices. Feedback from these observations helps us continuously improve and ensure we are providing high-quality learning experiences for every child.

Behavior Support Philosophy

At our nature-based preschools, we believe that every child is capable, connected, and deserving of compassionate guidance. We view behavior as a form of communication and recognize that children are continually developing the emotional, social, and self-regulation skills needed to navigate relationships and learning environments successfully.

Our approach to behavior support is strongly grounded in the principles of Dr. Becky Bailey's Conscious Discipline framework. This approach guides us in creating safe, connected, and responsive learning environments where children can build lifelong social-emotional skills.

We believe that challenging or undesirable behaviors are not signs of a "bad" child, but rather indicators of lagging skills, unmet needs, stress, or unsolved problems. Instead of relying on punishment, shame, or exclusion, we focus on understanding the root cause of behavior and teaching the skills children need to be successful.

We also recognize that social-emotional skill development is a gradual process and an important part of the work of childhood. Skills such as emotional regulation, communication, flexibility, empathy, frustration, tolerance, and problem-solving develop over time through consistent support, practice, co-regulation, and loving guidance from trusted adults. Early childhood is a critical developmental window for building these foundational skills, which support not only school success, but healthy relationships, resilience, and well-being throughout life.

Our teachers and support staff work together to:

- Build strong, trusting relationships with children
- Create predictable and emotionally safe classroom environments
- Teach emotional regulation, problem-solving, communication, and conflict-resolution skills
- Respond to behavior with empathy, consistency, and clear boundaries
- Support children in developing independence, resilience, and self-awareness



Discipline and Guidance

At our nature-based preschools, we believe that every child is capable, connected, and deserving of compassionate guidance. We view behavior as a form of communication and recognize that children are continually developing the emotional, social, and self-regulation skills needed to navigate relationships and learning environments successfully.

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Positive Guidance and Support

Our teachers and support staff work together to:

- Build strong, trusting relationships with children.
- Create predictable, emotionally safe, and responsive classroom environments.
- Establish clear, consistent, and developmentally appropriate expectations and boundaries.
- Teach and model emotional regulation, communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and other social-emotional skills.
- Respond to behavior with empathy, consistency, and clear boundaries.
- Help children identify, express, and understand their feelings and needs.
- Plan ahead and adjust the environment, routine, or expectations when appropriate to prevent or reduce challenging situations.
- Use redirection and offer meaningful choices or alternative solutions.
- Use visual prompts, cues, schedules, and other developmentally appropriate supports to help children understand expectations and routines.
- Provide opportunities for children to practice appropriate behaviors and social skills.
- Involve children in developmentally appropriate problem-solving and repairing relationships when appropriate.
- Provide a safe, supervised space where a child can regain a sense of calm and regulation.
- Co-regulate with a calm, caring adult, such as a teacher, staff member, social worker, or other support professional, when a child needs additional support to regulate.
- Support children in developing independence, resilience, self-awareness, and self-control.
- Tailor guidance and support to the individual child, recognizing that children develop skills at different rates and may require different approaches.
- Collaborate with families and, when appropriate, support professionals to better understand a child's needs and identify strategies that support the child's success.

When challenging behavior occurs, staff seek to understand what the child may be communicating and identify the skills or supports the child needs. Staff may modify the environment, provide additional adult support, adjust expectations, or explicitly teach and practice a skill. Our goal is not simply to stop a behavior, but to help children develop the skills they need to participate safely and successfully in the classroom community.



Prohibited Practices:

- Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, pinching, or other forms of corporal punishment.
- Humiliating, shaming, threatening, or frightening a child.
- Depriving a child of food, snacks, rest, or necessary toileting.
- Withholding outdoor play as a form of discipline.
- Isolating a child in an area where the child cannot be seen or appropriately supervised.

We recognize that children may sometimes need time, space, and adult support to regain a sense of safety and regulation. A designated safe or calming space may be used to support a child's regulation and learning; it is not used as a form of punishment, shame, or isolation. Children using such a space remain appropriately supervised.

When a child's behavior presents an ongoing challenge or safety concern, staff will work collaboratively with the child and family to better understand the child's needs and identify appropriate supports. This may include consultation with our support services team, individualized supports, or recommendations and referrals to outside professionals, agencies, or community resources when additional services are needed beyond what the preschool can provide.

Our first priority is always the safety, dignity, and well-being of every child. We seek to identify areas of growth, teach developing skills, strengthen relationships, and provide children with the support they need to experience success.

Our goal is not simply to stop challenging behavior. Our goal is to help children feel safe, connected, and capable while developing the skills they need to participate successfully in the classroom community.



Collaborative Family Support

We believe that children thrive when schools and families work together in partnership. Each preschool location includes dedicated support service staff consisting of a social worker or counselor, who collaborate with teachers and families to support each child's success.

Our support staff may provide:

- Classroom behavior and emotional support strategies
- Student accommodations and individualized planning
- Teacher coaching and consultation
- Parent support and consultation
- Collaboration between home and school to promote consistency and skill development
- Guidance and referrals to outside professionals or community resources when additional support may benefit a child or family

At times, a child or family may benefit from support beyond the preschool setting. When appropriate, our team may collaborate with families to help identify and connect with outside professionals or services, such as pediatricians, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, behavioral specialists, mental health providers, or other community resources. Any referrals or recommendations are made thoughtfully, collaboratively, and with the goal of supporting the overall well-being and success of the child.

Our goal is to bridge learning and social-emotional growth between school and home so that children feel supported across all environments. We value open communication, family collaboration, and a team-based approach that honors each child's unique strengths, developmental needs, and experiences.

Collaborative Family Support: Referrals

If a parent or staff member suspects that there is a need for additional assistance from an outside agency or professional (for example, if there are concerns about a child's speech or language, if there are suspected physical or mental health needs, if there is a need for food or clothing support, etc.) a member or members of the staff will consult with the Director of Support Services or Counselor and may possibly schedule a meeting with the parents to gather input and discuss concerns. Together, a plan of action will be determined to address the concern. The Director of Support Services will monitor progress on the plan. If it is determined that a child would benefit from an evaluation for special education services, parents/guardians should contact the student's resident elementary school. All evaluations for Special Education services are conducted through the student's home district. This includes establishing a plan to accommodate/support individuals with disabilities.

Collaborative Family Support: Building Plans for Success

When a pattern of behavior emerges that raises concerns about a child's safety, the safety of others, or the child's ability to participate successfully in the preschool environment, our team will work collaboratively with the child's family to better understand the underlying needs and develop an individualized support plan. This may include additional classroom support, consultation with our support services team, and recommendations or referrals to outside professionals, agencies, or community resources that provide additional services beyond what we are able to provide within the preschool setting.

Family partnership and open communication are an important part of this process. We recognize that families may need time, support, and guidance as they consider recommendations, and we will approach these conversations with care, respect, and a shared focus on the child's well-being. We will work with families to identify resources and strategies that can be used consistently across home and school.

Our first priority is always to support the child and maintain a safe, nurturing environment for all children. If a child's behavior continues to present a significant risk of harm to themselves or others despite reasonable efforts to provide support, or if the necessary family partnership and supports cannot be established to safely meet the child's needs within the preschool setting, the ODC Network may determine that a temporary leave of absence or a change in enrollment is necessary.

Above all, we strive to create nurturing preschool communities where children feel safe, connected, respected, and empowered to learn and grow.

Corporal Punishment

In accordance with state law, the use of corporal punishment shall not be permitted. No employee, volunteer or contractor employed or engaged by the ODC shall threaten to inflict physical pain upon a student as a penalty or punishment for a student's offense. Staff members may, within the scope of their employment, use and apply reasonable force and restraint in self-defense, to quell a disturbance threatening physical injury to others, to obtain possession of weapons, or for the protection of persons or property. If any employee inflicts unreasonable, inappropriate or unlawful force upon a student, he or she may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.



Section 07

Family Partnership

Ways to get involved, stay connected, and share any concerns. You are an important part of our school community.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

The partnership between parents/caregivers and teaching staff is important for a child's well-being, growth and development. Formal opportunities for parent/caregiver involvement include home visits (GSRP families) and Teacher conferences. Topics typically discussed during conferences and home visits include student progress, assessment results, recommendations for additional support, and adjustment to preschool.

Additionally, parent/caregiver classes on a variety of important topics including discipline, typical development, and temperament sessions are offered throughout the year as a support for parents of our preschoolers. The sessions, free to ODC preschool parents, are led by the Directors of Support Services. Parents may also participate in our regional advisory group, the Great Start Collaborative Parent Coalition. All parents are encouraged to actively participate. Please email: ottawaparentcoalition@gmail.com for more information.

See below for Parent/Caregiver Expectations and specific Opportunities for Family Involvement.

Parent/Caregiver Expectations:

- Read emails, newsletters and flyers that are distributed digitally.
- Report all child absences in Procare.
- Ensure your child is appropriately dressed for the weather.
- Drop off and pick up your child on time.
- Attend the ODC Preschool Orientation. Orientation is for parents/caregivers and individuals who will be providing transportation for students. The purpose of Orientation is to equip parents/caregivers and whomever will be transporting your child to and from preschool with all of the important details of that process and to learn what to expect in order to have a wonderful school year.
- Attend the Open House with your child. The Open House provides the opportunity for families to meet the preschool staff and see the learning environment.
- Attend conferences with your child's teacher held in the fall and late winter.



Opportunities for Parent Involvement

- Parent/Caregiver & Teacher Conferences

Parent/Caregiver & Teacher Conferences are designed to listen to parents, celebrate the child, and set goals for the upcoming months. Teachers share assessments (TS Gold and ASQ - Ages and Stages Questionnaire), observations, and opportunities for home and school to work in partnership.

- Parent/Caregiver Classes

We have a strong desire to build a parent learning community where all feel welcome and supported. We strive to connect our families to one another as well as provide resources to assist families along their unique parenting journey. One of those opportunities are Parent/Caregiver Classes that focus on equipping parents with the knowledge, tools, and strategies to support the healthy development of their preschooler. Parent/Caregiver Classes are led by ODC's Support Services team.

- Autumn Adventure Night and Family Discovery Night

We welcome families to gather as our new school year begins. Autumn Adventure Night in October provides an opportunity for a family to visit the child's school, enjoy a hike on the trails, meet the teachers for hands-on activities along the way, and enjoy the company of other school families. During April, we celebrate the return of spring with Family Discovery Night. This event includes exciting nature experiences for the whole family, including fishing, meeting a live ambassador animal, and enjoying time on the nature playscape.

- School Fundraising Event

Each year, we host a school fundraising event asking families to join us to help shape the future of early childhood education in our community. Every dollar raised will provide scholarships that remove financial barriers and keep your school at the forefront of innovative, nature-based learning. Together, we can ensure every child has access to an exceptional education that nurtures curiosity, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning.

- Free membership / Discounted Summer Camps

With enrollment, the ODC Preschool families receive a one year membership to the Outdoor Discovery Center. The membership includes invitations and discounts to our events, camps, and programs.

Volunteering

Families can participate in our classroom community in several meaningful ways:

- Learning Alongside Your Child: Spend time exploring and playing with your child to experience school through their eyes while offering an extra hand during the school day. Sign-ups will be shared by your child's lead teacher via email starting in mid-October each school year.
- Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer Tasks: Teachers may occasionally request help with specific projects or needs. These requests will be shared by email, or you may reach out to your child's lead teacher to offer support.
- Family Sharing: Join the class to share a special family tradition or pastime—such as a story, cooking activity, art project, game, cultural tradition, or a way your family connects with nature. Contact your child's lead teacher to schedule a sharing time.

Volunteer Requirements

- All volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application before participating and will be screened through the Public Sex Offender Registry (PSOR). Individuals listed on the registry may not volunteer.
- All volunteers are trained in emergency procedures prior to volunteering.
- Volunteers in Michigan are mandated reporters and are required to report any suspected child abuse or neglect.
- While participating in the classroom, cell phones, cameras, and other recording devices may not be used.
- All student information is confidential and may not be shared or discussed outside of the learning environment.
- Volunteers will remain under the supervision of a child care staff member at all times.

Grievances

Our program strives to provide a positive environment for all. However, at times a concern may arise. If you have any questions or concerns you cannot resolve with the teacher directly, please bring the concerns to the attention of the Site Director who will work through concerns with you.





Section 08

Great Start Readiness Program

What GSRP families need to know about Michigan's free preschool program and how it works at our schools.

GREAT START READINESS PROGRAM

The Great Start Readiness Program is Michigan's free PreK state funded preschool program for four-year-olds. The programs are funded under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) and every learning environment is licensed by Michigan's Child Care Licensing Bureau.

Great Start Readiness Program Philosophy: Our goal is to provide every preschooler with the best educational opportunities through our child-centered, hands-on curriculum set in a rich learning environment which is created through our families, community and professional staff.

- We believe that young children learn to the best of their ability when given:
- A safe, healthy, nurturing environment
- Development of strong teacher-child relationships in combination with strong family-teacher relationships in which we are all valued
- Many opportunities for play and learning through play experiences
- Families are involved and we work together to help your child
- The activities are geared toward your child's current skills and interests

Our decisions are made from a child-centered focus which includes looking at the Early Childhood Standards of Quality- Prekindergarten, the curriculum, assessment information, feedback from parents and the diverse social, economic, cultural and family needs that exist within the learning environment.

Under the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) in Michigan, children must not be excluded, suspended, or expelled from classroom programming or transportation services for behavioral, toileting, or other non-health-related needs.

GSRP Withdrawal

Under the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) in Michigan, children actively enrolled in GSRP programming must not be excluded, suspended, or expelled from classroom programming or transportation services for behavioral, toileting, or other non-health-related needs. This protection reflects Michigan's commitment to inclusive early childhood programming and is a condition of GSRP funding. For children enrolled in ODC's GSRP programming, withdrawal decisions cannot be based solely on behavioral concerns, toileting challenges, or similar developmental needs; our focus remains on partnership, support, and inclusive practices.

For children not enrolled in GSRP programming, ODC retains the discretion to make enrollment decisions based on all factors outlined in the Withdrawal section of this handbook found on page 18.

Qualifying for FREE Preschool

GSRP: Children must be 4 years of age on or before December 1st of the year of enrollment and may not yet be 5 years old on or before September 1st of the year of enrollment. An application must be completed. Prioritization for enrollment is based on annual self-reported income. All applications are confidential.

Transportation Policy: Transportation may be available upon request.

Parents/Guardians must:

- 1) Meet the enrollment guidelines
- 2) Return ALL completed forms which includes the following:
 - All families are asked to complete an enrollment packet prior to the first day of attendance in GSRP. The packet includes an application, health requirements and emergency contact.
 - Families will need to provide proof of the child's age (e.g., birth certificate, hospital certificate or similar documentation) and immunization card along with other important enrollment requirements.

To maintain enrollment in the program, families are asked to:

- Agree to keep the Child Emergency Information up to date e.g., (telephone numbers, workplace, address, emergency contact, etc.)
- Support staff in maintaining a safe and enjoyable environment through a positive, preventive discipline approach.
- Attend and participate in scheduled parent/guardian/teacher home visits and conferences.
- See that students are in school unless absence is absolutely necessary. Families are responsible for informing the teachers when a child is ill or absent for some important reason.
- Respond to teacher recommendations concerning physical conditions e.g., (scheduling appointments with appropriate professionals. Families are requested to provide teachers with results.
- Respond to requests for information or assistance needed to promote student success.

Note: Late Pick-Up Fees are waived for GSRP families.

Program Measurement

Ottawa Area Intermediate School District and ODC Preschool GSRP are required to work with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to measure the effects of the state-wide preschool program, Great Start Readiness Program. Information is sometimes collected about staff, enrolled children, and their families. Program staff or a representative from MDE might:

- Ask parents questions about their child and family.
- Observe children in the learning environment.
- Measure what children know about letters, words, and numbers.
- Ask teachers how children are learning and growing.

Information from you and about your child will not be shared with others in any way that you or your child could be identified. It is protected by law.

Section 09

Rights and Responsibilities

The policies that protect your family's rights, your child's privacy, and our shared community.

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Child Abuse and Neglect Mandated Reporting

As required by Michigan law, all ODC Early Childhood Network staff are mandated reporters. Any staff member who has cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected is required to make a report to the appropriate child protective authorities.

ODC Network staff do not investigate allegations of abuse or neglect, determine whether abuse has occurred, or make judgments regarding the validity of a concern. Our role is to report suspected abuse or neglect as required by law and cooperate with any subsequent investigation conducted by the appropriate authorities.

Cultural Awareness

Preschool age children begin to notice similarities and differences at a young age. By age three, children begin to show signs of being influenced by societal norms and biases and may exhibit "pre prejudice" toward others on the basis of gender or race or being differently abled (Derman-Sparks, et. al). ODC will create meaningful experiences that celebrate and acknowledge our families similarities and differences. We will represent a more diverse society and inclusive environment. We strongly believe:

- Nature-based education should be accessible to all children and families
- Diversity in our education programs makes them stronger
- High demand for our programming, systemic inequities, and registration logistics create barriers for families to enroll in our program
- These barriers disproportionately affect children of color and economically disadvantaged families
- Program decisions should be based on more than just input from existing ODC families and must include the interests of those who aren't represented.

Non-discrimination

The ODC Network does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, height, weight, marital status, handicap, disability, or limited English proficiency in any of its programs or activities. The following office has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

Travis Williams, Chief Executive Officer
ODC Network, 4214 56th Street, Holland, MI 49423

Licensing Notebook

Each ODC Early Childhood site maintains a licensing notebook on the premises that includes all licensing inspection and special investigation reports and related corrective action plans for the last 5 calendar years, and a summary sheet outlining the documents contained in the notebook. This notebook is available for parents to review during regular business hours. Licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports, and corrective action plans from at least the past 3 years are available on the Child Care Licensing Bureau's website at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Supporting Individual Needs & Accessibility

We believe every child, family, and staff member deserves to participate fully in our community and to experience a sense of belonging.

We also recognize that access to nature may look different for different children. We work to identify meaningful ways for every child to participate in outdoor exploration and learning, adapting materials, activities, routes, expectations, and supports when appropriate. We value multiple ways of experiencing and interacting with the natural world and believe that inclusion enriches our entire community.

We work in partnership with families, educators, specialists, and community resources to understand and support the individual strengths and needs of each child. When a child has a disability, developmental difference, or other individual need, we collaborate with the family and appropriate professionals to identify reasonable accommodations, adaptations, and supports that allow the child to participate meaningfully in our program.

Because our program includes significant time outdoors and in natural environments, we thoughtfully consider accessibility and individual needs across both indoor and outdoor learning environments.

Depending on the child's needs, supports may include:

- adaptations to materials or activities
- changes to the environment or routine
- additional visual or verbal supports
- individualized strategies
- alternative ways to participate
- other reasonable accommodations.

We approach accommodations from a strengths-based perspective. Rather than asking whether a child can participate in an experience, we ask: "What can we change, adapt, or provide so this child can participate meaningfully?"

We also work to support families and staff members with disabilities by listening to their needs, communicating openly, and making reasonable accommodations consistent with applicable requirements and our program's ability to provide them.

Our goal is not for every child to experience the environment in exactly the same way. Our goal is for every child to have meaningful opportunities to participate, explore, learn, contribute, and belong.

Drug, Smoke, Vape and Weapon Free Zone

Every ODC campus is a drug, smoke, vape and weapon free zone. Please extinguish cigarettes and properly discard smoking products, including chewing tobacco, prior to entering any ODC property. Help us stay a drug, smoke, vape and weapon free zone by informing anyone that will be escorting your child to and from school of this policy. According to state law it is illegal for any person to carry weapons, concealed or otherwise, in a preschool/daycare facility.

Home Language

At ODC we believe that every family and student brings value and unique experiences into our learning communities. Students and staff who are linguistically and culturally diverse bring their own unique value into our community that has the potential to enrich the experience of other students and educators. Students and staff who are multilingual contribute to the vibrancy of our nature-based programming by sharing their experiences, culture, skills, interests, and home language with peers.

Research shows that multilingual children benefit from continuous use of their home language at all levels of English language development (Schwartz, 2014). Much of multilingual children's language development, like other children, happens through engagement in play-based activities with peers (Huerta & Riojas-Cortez, 2014). In order to best support the language development of all students in our care, ODC Preschools is committed to encouraging the use of students' home language in the classroom setting.

ODC will support students' home language by:

- Utilizing fluent staff members speaking students' home language in class when possible
- Using greetings or simple phrases in the home languages of students
- Reading multilingual texts in students' home language
- Labeling the classroom items in the students' home language
- Providing learning experiences and materials that showcase all students' identities and cultural backgrounds

Breastfeeding

Our sites will provide privacy in a quiet, safe location within our school buildings upon parent request.

Confidentiality

Students' personal information is protected under the Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA). This includes any learning or disciplinary needs of students or any data gathered as part of the referral process; this information is confidential and may not be shared or discussed outside of the learning environment. Assessment data (e.g., developmental screening results) will only be shared as "group results" and only with parental consent. If you, as a parent or learning environment volunteer, are ever asked about a student, simply communicate that you cannot discuss or share information about students. If you have a question about confidentiality, please talk with the Site Director.

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is a Federal law designed to protect the privacy of a student's education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student, or former student, who has reached the age of 18 or is attending any school beyond the high school level. Students and former students to whom the rights have transferred are called eligible students.

Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review all of the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of materials in education records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to inspect the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies. Parents and eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records believed to be inaccurate or misleading.

If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record commenting on the contested information in the record.

Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student before releasing any information from a student's record. However, the law allows schools to disclose records, without consent, to the following parties:

- School employees who have a need to know
- Other schools to which a student is transferring
- Certain government officials in order to carry out lawful functions
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
- Organizations conducting certain studies for the school
- Accrediting organizations
- Individuals who have obtained court orders or subpoenas
- Persons who need to know in cases of health and safety emergencies; and state and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific state law.

For additional information or technical assistance, you may call (202) 260-3887 or TDD (202) 260-8956 or contact:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

2026-2027



Family Calendar



July '26

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August '26

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September '26

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November '26

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December '26

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April '27

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May '27

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June '27

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June 1-Sep 11	Summer Break
July 18	Macatawa Water Festival
Sep 1-2	Parent Orientation
Sep 4-7	Labor Day Weekend
Sep 9-10	Open Houses
Sep 14-18	First Week of School
Oct 8	Autumn Adventure Night
Oct 17	Treats & Trails at ODC
Nov 23-24	Conferences/No School
Nov 25-27	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 21-Jan 1	Winter Break
Feb 11-12	Mid Winter Break
Mar 10-11	Conferences/No School
Mar 12	No School
Apr 2-9	Spring Break
April 26-29	School Picture Days
Apr 29	Family Discovery Night
May 24-28	Last Week of School
May 31	Summer Break Begins
Blue	Events
Green	No School
Orange	Conferences