



GBPP Communication about the 2021/2022 School Year

August 2, 2021

Dear Preschool Community,

We are gearing up and getting excited about welcoming each of you to school this fall. We were blessed with a grant at the end of the school year and have made some improvements that will make this year even better, including new carpets with padding underneath, playground equipment, and more. We are welcoming back some returning teachers, including Mrs. Noel, Mrs. Michael and Mrs. England, as well as some new faces. We will be again having Spanish offered to PK3 through kindergarten. We welcome Mrs. McCarty as the new music and STEM teacher. Music will be offered weekly to all classes. STEM class will replace computer class for PK4 through Kindergarten, in which Mrs. McCarty will offer enrichment classes that incorporate science, technology, engineering and math activities to engage students in higher-level thinking and problem solving. I think it is already shaping up to be a wonderful year.

We are also making thoughtful preparations to have another successful school year while facing the challenges presented by the COVID pandemic. Last year, we had multiple mitigation strategies in place to ensure that our school stayed safely open, including extra cleaning procedures, frequent washing of hands, screening and exclusion of individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, cohorting classes, smaller class sizes, and highly encouraging wearing masks by all students. Consistent with the Governor's orders, students ages 5 and up were required to wear masks. Although there were challenges related to the pandemic, we were able to provide a wonderful year to our students, full of fun, laughter, learning and growth.

With guidance from the multiple agencies that govern business and schools, including the CDC, VDH, DOLI, and DOE (it's a whole other alphabet to learn as a preschool director!), the preschool leadership is planning on implementing the following preparations to again provide a safe, effective and fun learning experience for our students, staff and families:

- **School Illness policy** to exclude children and staff who are exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 until they have been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication and/or consistent with quarantine guidelines set by the Virginia Department of Health
- **Daily Health Check** for staff and students before coming to preschool. Parents will agree to monitor their children before school each day and keep them home if not feeling

well. We will not utilize a daily screening tool as we did last year, but we ask you to please complete a health check on your own each day.

- **Nonessential visitors** will be welcomed into the school on a limited basis with masks on and social distancing required.
- **Hygiene/handwashing** will be emphasized daily in the preschool and the classrooms. Children and staff will wash hands upon arrival and many times throughout the day. Although we will encourage and utilize handwashing with soap and water when possible, we will also utilize hand sanitizer that is at least 70% alcohol.
- **Social distancing will be encouraged** as much as possible in an age appropriate manner. Children will play and interact with each other, but will be encouraged to maintain their personal space. Classes will not mix with other classes in an effort to limit the sharing of germs. No more than two classes at a time will play on the playground.
- **Frequent cleaning and disinfecting** of high touch surfaces, toys, and laundered items will occur throughout the day. Toys that are not easily cleaned will be removed from the classroom. Items, such a playdough, will not be shared but each student will have their individual container. Children's belongings such as jackets will be kept in containers to keep them from touching each other.
- **Masks** will be worn by staff when indoors with children, as directed by the Virginia DOLI. Masks are highly encouraged to be worn by all students when indoors. The CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, Virginia Department of Health, and Virginia Department of Education have all sent communication to the preschool indicating that this is the safest way to stay open at this time.
 - [CDC Guidance](#)
 - [VDH Guidance](#)
 - [AAP Guidance for Opening Schools in Fall 2021](#)

The local school immunologist at the Virginia Department of Health has let me know that Chesapeake is considered an area of high transmission at this time and they strongly recommend the use of masks indoors for all staff, students, and visitors in school settings. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

Last year, the majority of our students were able to successfully wear masks and still have a wonderful year. Although the younger students did not keep them on as consistently, we still encouraged it especially during chapel or other times that they were around other classes of students. We feel that we had a successful year staying open, having fun, and providing an excellent educational experience. Although masks are not going to be required, we hope that you will support our efforts to keep our school safe and OPEN.

- The one exception to the mask rule will be Stay and Play. We will offer Stay and Play to families this year, but because students will be mixing from other classes, we will require students to wear a mask during the Stay and Play time. However, when they are eating or playing outside, students can take their masks off. And Mrs. Gehres plans on playing outside a lot!

At home, you can help us by

- **Practicing good hygiene habits** with your children, such as covering your cough or sneeze and proper handwashing techniques. If possible and appropriate, such as for PK4, PK5 and kindergarten, practice wearing a mask and encourage them to wear one when close to other children. Talk with them about not touching their faces.
- **Cleaning and disinfecting** any items that your child brings to school on a daily basis, including jackets, backpacks or other items. We ask that all snacks/lunches be sent in ziplock bags, paper bags, or other disposable containers. Reusable water bottles are ok to send in, however no lunchboxes please except for Kindergarten or Stay and Play.
- **Don't bring unnecessary items to school.** Please keep children's toys and other belongings at home if at all possible.
- **Bring in supplies** to help us with these new procedures and policies. Cleaning supplies are always welcome, and teachers will send home supply lists at the beginning of the year that they will need for their class.
- And most importantly, **keeping your children home if they are not feeling well.**

With all of these policies and procedures in place, we will continue to follow our curriculum objectives to provide a quality educational experience. No amount of precaution or preparedness can 100% guarantee the safety and health of students and staff, and we will ask parents to sign a waiver at the beginning of the year acknowledging this.

I am grateful to be part of a community that has pulled together and been strong throughout this difficult time. I appreciate your prayers, support and grace. If you need anything or have any concerns, I am happy to talk with you. If you have any questions, please reach out to the preschool through email at preschool@gbpres.org or through a phone call, 757-579-4303.

Sincerely,

Becky Miles, Director

The Preschool Board