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Frontier Central Schools' UPK Handbook

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Pre-K Philosophy

Pre-Kindergarten is a time for children to expand their love of learning, their ability to get along with others and their interest in reaching out to the world. While Pre-K marks an important transition from home to the primary grades, it is important to us that children still get to be children. Our developmentally appropriate pre-k classrooms encourage the growth of children's self-esteem, their cultural identities, their independence and their individual strengths. Pre-K children will continue to develop control of their own behavior through the guidance and support of warm, caring adults. At this stage, children are already eager to learn and possess innate curiosity. Our teachers strive to provide the children with the kind of environment necessary for them to grow physically, emotionally and intellectually.



Pre-K Goals

It is our goal here at Frontier to provide each child with the opportunity to grow in the following areas:

- ◆ Social skills
- ◆ Creative expression
- ◆ Emotional control
- ◆ Intellectual growth

This is accomplished through learning centers with hands-on materials. Our program recognizes that children develop at different rates. Our developmental approach allows the teacher to guide each child according to his or her level of readiness.

Communication

In order to keep communication open between school and home, we will be sending a take home folder with your child each day. Please be sure to take a peek in the folder each and every day to see what's going on with your child. Remove all papers and return the folder in your child's backpack the very next day. If you need to send us a note, tuck it inside. That's where we will check every morning!

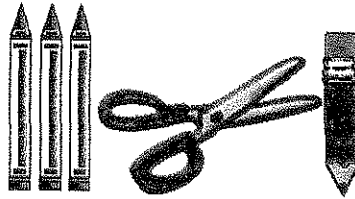
You can plan on receiving a newsletter on a regular basis. It will keep you up to date on what we've been doing and what's coming up.

If you need to reach us, please call Cloverbank at 926-1760 ext. 6110 or Blasdel at 926-1750 ext. 5110.

Before School Starts

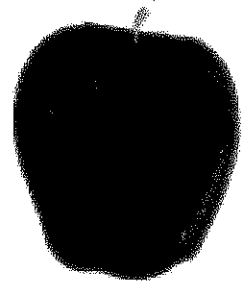
Remember when you were faced with a new situation? You didn't know the people, how to find the room, what to wear, or what was expected of you. Now think about how overwhelming new situations must be for young children who have far less experience in dealing with the unknown. Here are some ideas to help smooth the transition:

- ◆ Good feelings are contagious! If you are genuinely enthusiastic about the upcoming change, your child will look forward to the change too.
- ◆ Begin preparing your child for the change in routine one or two weeks before the first day of school.
- ◆ Routine is important to help a child predict what is about to occur. Help them set out their clothes and backpack the night before school starts.
- ◆ Rest assured, dealing with this change and separation from home and family will be our curriculum for the first few days!



Birthdays

We will be celebrating your child's birthday. We will schedule their snack day on their birthday, so they will be the "special helper" and the birthday treat will be the snack.



Snack

We will be having a small, nutritious snack each day. The children will take turns bringing in a snack to share with their classmates. Please send in a snack with a juice box for each child in the class. You will receive a snack calendar each month telling you when it is your child's turn to bring in a snack. Keep in mind that the snacks should be nutritional. Individual servings work best. Some suggestions are:

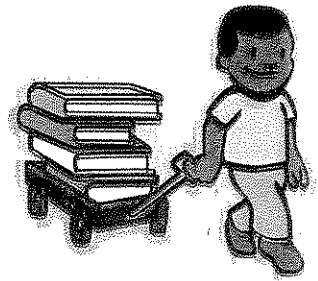
- ◆ Chex mix
- ◆ A small baggie of cereal
- ◆ Crackers
- ◆ Granola bars
- ◆ Fruit
- ◆ Veggies
- ◆ Pretzels

[Please check with your child's teacher regarding students with food allergies]

Show and Share

We will be having Show and Share weekly. This special time builds communication and language skills and fosters self-esteem.

We will also have special sharing days. You will be alerted to these through the newsletter.



Illnesses and Absences

Regular attendance is expected of all Pre-K children. If your child is absent due to illness, please send a written note explaining their absence when they are well enough to return to school. You must also call the school nurse the morning your child is absent. If your child becomes ill during the school day, he or she will be escorted to the nurse's office and you will be notified.

Arrival and Departure

The children should arrive through the parking lot entrance promptly at 8:15 for the morning session and 12:15 for the afternoon session. Each child must be signed in each day. Children need to be picked up through the same doors promptly at 10:45 for the morning session and 2:45 for the afternoon session. Any child arriving late or departing early must be signed in or out in the main office.

Attendance

Expectation is that students will attend regularly. Cases of chronic absences may require a parent conference and may lead to exclusion from the program.

Parent Conferences

Individual conferences about your child's progress will be held during the school year. Informal conferences can be scheduled at any time by contacting us through the school office.

Clothing

Please have your child dress in clothes that they are able to take care of by themselves. This helps to encourage self-help skills. Also, they should wear shoes or sneakers with rubber soles.



We are looking forward to an exciting and productive year!

Frontier Central Schools UPK Faculty

Meeting the New York State Regulations for Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Program Design

The Frontier Central School District universal pre-kindergarten program is a half-day program that operates five days per week according to the district schedule (a minimum of 180 days per year); Hamburg EduKids, with whom we partner, also offers a half-day program that corresponds to the district schedule; CAO Head Start, another partner, operates a full day program that adheres to the 180-day minimum.

CAO Head Start has income restrictions for eligibility and EduKids enrolls students on a first-come, first-served basis. The Frontier CSD in-house program utilizes a random selection process to enroll eligible children in universal pre-kindergarten classes.

The environment and learning activities of the pre-kindergarten program have been designed to promote and increase inclusion and integration of preschool children with disabilities.

The program has been designed to ensure that participating children with limited English proficiency are provided equal access to the program and opportunities to achieve the same program goals and standards as other participating children.

The maximum class size for a pre-kindergarten class is 18 children. For each class of up to 18 students, there is one teacher and one paraprofessional assigned to the class. EduKids follows an 8:1 ratio in their staffing, so that for each class of 18 students there is a teacher and two assistants.

Curriculum

Frontier Central's pre-kindergarten program has adopted and implemented curricula, aligned with the State learning standards, that ensures continuity with instruction in the early elementary grades and is integrated with the district's instructional program in kindergarten through grade twelve. Using input from district teachers of Kindergarten, Frontier's Pre-K teachers are creating curriculum maps for ELA and Math, and will be completing maps for Science and Social Studies in the near future. These maps correspond to the NYS learning standards for pre-kindergarten, and the academic program is supported by the use of "The Creative Curriculum for Preschool" which details the ways in which center and life-skills activities promote development.

The pre-kindergarten program provides early literacy and emergent reading instruction based on effective, evidence-based practices. To maintain consistency with the elementary program, the pre-kindergarten classes at Frontier use a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Essential components of this program include:

- Background knowledge
- Phonological awareness
- Expressive and receptive language
- Vocabulary development
- Phonemic awareness

Activities are learner-centered and have been designed and provided in a way that promotes the child's total growth and development, and ensure that:

- Children are encouraged to be self-assured and independent through a balanced schedule of teacher-initiated and child-initiated learning activities
- Instructional materials and equipment are arranged in learning centers that promote a balance of individual and small group activities
- Teachers use intentional planning to focus instruction to meet differentiated learning styles of students

Assessments, Monitoring and Reporting

Frontier has established a process for assessing the developmental baseline and progress of all children participating in the program. This process provides for on-going assessment of the development of language, cognitive and social skills. The instrument(s) used for assessment is valid and reliable and assessment information is used to inform classroom instruction and professional development.

- *Circle Assessment* is given three times a year in September, March, and June. This assessment evaluates vocabulary (picture naming), letter recognition, and early math skills (counting, shapes, number recognition).
- Student Portfolios are assembled as observations of each child's progress are made. These include:
 - o Self portraits
 - o Name writing samples
 - o Letter identification checklist
 - o Fine motor activity samples (i.e. cutting)
 - o Other examples of student work
- Student Progress Reports are completed 3x a year. These note progress in the following areas:

- o Social/Emotional Growth,
- o Self Help
- o Oral Language Development
- o Pre-Reading
- o Pre-Writing
- o The Arts
- o Physical Growth
- o Personal Data
- o Mathematics
- Parent/Teacher Conferences are held formally once a year or as needed (EduKids schedules these 2x a year at the middle and end of the year).

Health and Nutrition

All pre-kindergarten students are screened as new entrants through the use of the following:

- Frontier Schools Health Certificate/Appraisal Form
- FCSD Confidential Medical Form
- Lead Screening
- Dental Health Certificate

Frontier's pre-kindergarten programs, as well as the EduKids' and Head Start programs, provide a nutritional meal and/or snack each day. For the in-district program, parents provide these snacks as part of our parent involvement model. Meals and snacks are provided in an environment conducive to interaction between staff and children and at a time appropriate to meet the children's needs and provide sufficient time for eating and interaction.

Staff Qualifications

Pre-kindergarten teachers providing instruction at Frontier possess a teaching license or certificate valid for service in the early childhood grades; or a teaching license or certificate for students with disabilities valid for service in early childhood grades; or for eligible agencies collaborating with the district to provide pre-kindergarten services, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field, or a teaching license or certificate valid for services in the childhood grades, and a written plan to obtain a certification valid for service in the early childhood grades within five years.

Pre-kindergarten teacher aides providing support in pre-kindergarten classrooms meet the requirements prescribed by the Frontier Central School District Board of Education.

Professional development is based on the instructional needs of children and is provided to pre-kindergarten teachers and staff in district and agency settings in which pre-kindergarten services are provided.

Parental Involvement

Frontier's pre-kindergarten program has developed procedures to ensure active engagement of parents and/or guardians in the education of their children. Teachers engage in home visits for each child prior to the start of school, and parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year. Parents are asked to provide snacks on a rotating schedule, and are encouraged to visit the classroom and/or volunteer. They are also asked to take an active role in supporting their children academically by working with them on homework assignments.

Support Services

Frontier CSD provides, directly or through referral to the Committee on Preschool Special Education, services to children and their families necessary to support the child's participation in the pre-kindergarten program. Support services are provided to the maximum extent practicable in the language or mode of communication that the parents and/or guardians and the child best understand. Whenever possible, such support services are provided in collaboration with other community organizations in a non-duplicative manner.

Collaborating Agencies

Not less than 10 percent of the total grant award to Frontier Central Schools is set aside for the provision of the instructional program through collaborative efforts with eligible agencies. Frontier has collaborative arrangements with Hamburg EduKids and CAO Head Start. The programs effectively use resources of the school district, eligible agencies, and the community to ensure that services are provided in an efficient and non-duplicative manner.

The school district monitors compliance by collaborating eligible agencies with all fiscal and program requirements, assesses student progress in the pre-kindergarten program, and corrects any identified deficiencies.