



# Little Learners PRESCHOOL

AT VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT

## Family Handbook

## 2023/24

# Welcome To 2023/24 Little Learners Preschool

The Little Learners Preschool staff would like to welcome you and your child to the 2023-2024 school year. The following information will be used throughout the year and should be saved as a reference. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Recreation Supervisor, Julie Freels, at (847) 996-6808 or [julief@vhparkdistrict.org](mailto:julief@vhparkdistrict.org). We look forward to a wonderful year of preschool with your family.

## Meet & Greet (Parent/Caregiver and Child Attend For A Quick Welcome)

Our small group Meet & Greet format allows our families and preschoolers to ease their way into the school year. Families will be emailed a thirty minute timeslot to view the classroom, meet the instructors, and ask any questions they may have.

August 30	M/W/F 2s, M/W/F 3s, M/W/F 4s, and Preschool Enrichment
August 31	Tu/Th 2s, Tu/Th 3s, and Tu/W/Th 4s

## First Day of Preschool (Child Attends Independently)

Our preschoolers attend the first day of preschool independently. Quick, positive goodbyes help ease the transition. Rest assured, our preschool staff will contact you by phone if your child is unsettled after 15-20 minutes.

Tu/Th 2s	September 5	9:00-10:00am or 10:00-11:00am *
M/W/F 2s	September 6	9:00-10:00am or 10:00-11:00am *
Tu/Th 3s	September 5	8:35-11:35am
M/W/F 3s	September 6	8:35-11:35am
Tu/W/Th 4s	September 6	8:45-11:45am
M/W/F 4s	September 6	8:45-11:45am
Preschool Enrichment	September 6	11:45am-2:30pm

\* Two-Year-Old Preschool: The first four classes will be one-hour (either 9-10am or 10-11am) with a parent/caregiver. Your assigned timeslot will be emailed to you in August.

# 2023/24 School Calendar

September	5	Tu/Th 2s & Tu/Th 3s Classes Begin
September	6	M/W/F 2s, M/W/F 3s, Tu/W/Th 4s, M/W/F 4s, & Preschool Enrichment Classes Begin
September	25	No School - Non-Attendance Day
October	9	No School - Non-Attendance Day
October	20	No School - Teacher Institute Day
November	7	No School - Non-Attendance Day
November	21	Parent/Teacher Conferences (Threes Only)
November	21-24	No School - Thanksgiving Break
December	6	Little Learners Preschool Winter Celebration (All Classes)
December	21	No School - Winter Break Begins
January	8	Classes Resume (M/W/F Classes)
January	9	Classes Resume (Tu/Th and Tu/W/Th Classes)
January	15	No School - Non-Attendance Day
February	16	No School - Non-Attendance Day
	19	No School - Non-Attendance Day
March	4	No School - Non-Attendance Day
March	6	Little Learners Preschool Spring Art Show (All Classes)
March	25-29	No School - Spring Break
April	24	Parent/Teacher Conferences (Fours Only) / No 4s Morning Preschool
May	15	Preschool Graduation 5:30 p.m. (Fours Only)
May	16	Last Day/Class Picnic (Tu/Th and Tu/W/Th Classes)
May	17	Last Day/Class Picnic (M/W/F Classes)

## Little Learners Preschool Goals & Expectations

Little Learners Preschool provides a safe and nurturing learning environment that embraces all children and their diverse learning styles, needs and interests. Developmentally-appropriate instruction is provided by caring instructors in an environment that values social, cultural, and linguistic diversity while fostering a love of learning.

Our curriculum is guided by the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age 3 and by the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards focusing on the development of the whole child. Our instructors offer unique learning experiences that are play-based to promote social-emotional, physical, language and cognitive development.

Children participate in a variety of learning opportunities designed to develop independence, problem-solving, critical-thinking, creativity, self-expression as well as social and academic skills. Classroom interest centers and activities offer rich exposure to literacy, mathematics, science & technology, social studies, the arts, and English language acquisition to prepare our preschoolers for elementary school and beyond.

## Student Paperwork

Children enrolled in Little Learners Preschool must have a complete Brightwheel App file and the following paperwork on file. Forms are available online at [www.vhparkdistrict.org](http://www.vhparkdistrict.org).

- State of Illinois DHS Certificate of Child Health Examination  
(Completed By Child's Physician / Required Annually—Parent/Guardian Must Complete Their Portion on Page 2)
- Only If Applicable - Medication Dispensing Form and/or Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan

The Brightwheel App registration must be completed accurately and thoroughly one week prior to the first day of preschool. All other forms should be completed accurately and thoroughly and submitted to [julief@vhparkdistrict.org](mailto:julief@vhparkdistrict.org) one week prior to the first day of preschool. Should your contact information change, update your Brightwheel App account and also notify the registration desk to make changes in the registration database if applicable.

## Tuition Payment Schedule

The first preschool tuition payment was due by July 5. A payment will be due on the 5th of each month through February 5. No refunds will be granted after December 5 unless the Park District cancels class.

## Little Learners 2023/24 Preschool Staff & Communication

Little Learners Preschool staff are looking forward to providing your child with a positive and rewarding preschool experience. We hope to establish mutual relationships with each child and family. Your child will frequently come home with a note and/or project. Check your child's bag on a daily basis in order to remain informed about classroom activities. For your convenience, preschool information will also be communicated through the Brightwheel App. Calendars informing families of themes, daily activities, and special events will be posted online at [www.vhparkdistrict.org](http://www.vhparkdistrict.org) at the beginning of each month and displayed on the Little Learners Preschool bulletin board(s) in the preschool wing.

Understand that drop off and pick up times are very busy; please be patient when approaching instructors or the Recreation Supervisor with questions/concerns. If you are rushed for time, you may submit your concerns through the Brightwheel App and staff will contact you later in the day. Our instructors do their best to avoid returning calls during instructional time, but will contact you before or after class. *If you have a pressing concern, please notify the instructor through the Brightwheel App or call /email the Recreation Supervisor at (847) 996-6808 or [julief@vhparkdistrict.org](mailto:julief@vhparkdistrict.org).*

### Program Location & Hours

Little Learners Preschoolers have access to their preschool classroom as well as both indoor and outdoor areas for gross motor development and exploratory learning.

#### Two-Year-Old Preschool

Classroom A - Orange Room	101440	Tu/Th	9/5-5/16	9:00a.m.-11:00 a.m.*
Classroom A - Orange Room	101656	M/W/F	9/6-5/17	9:00a.m.-11:00 a.m.*

\* The first four classes will be one-hour (either 9-10am or 10-11am) with a parent/caregiver. Your assigned timeslot will be emailed to you in August.

#### Three-Year-Old Preschool

Classroom D - Green Room	101441	M/W/F	9/6-5/17	8:35 a.m.-11:35 a.m.**
Classroom D - Green Room	101442	Tu/Th	9/5-5/16	8:35 a.m.-11:35 a.m.

\*\* Children enrolled in Preschool Enrichment remain with their morning preschool teacher until 11:45 a.m.

#### Four-Year-Old Preschool

Classroom B - Purple Room	101444	Tu/W/Th	9/6-5/16	8:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m.
Classroom C - Blue Room	101443	M/W/F	9/6-5/17	8:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

#### Preschool Enrichment

Classroom D - Green Room	101445	M/W/F	9/6-5/17	11:45 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
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## 2023/24 Preschool Supply List

Bring the following school supplies to your Meet & Greet:

- Crayons (24 Count; Preferably Crayola)
- Tray of Watercolor Paints (Preferably Crayola)
- Washable Liquid Glue (4 Ounce Bottle)
- 3 Glue Sticks
- 2 Black Permanent Markers
- Box of Gallon Size Baggies (Students with Last Names Beginning A-H)
- Box of Sandwich Size Baggies (Students with Last Names Beginning I-P)
- Box of Snack Size Baggies (Students with Last Names Beginning Q-Z)
- Box of Facial Tissue
- One 4x6 Family Photo
- Twistable Crayons (Four-Year-Old Students Only)
- Fine-Tip Washable Markers (Four-Year-Old Students Only)



### Daily Supplies Needed

Children should dress in clean, comfortable, washable clothing as many preschool activities are messy. Gym shoes are recommended to permit full participation in preschool activities. Children will be participating in both indoor and outdoor activities. Dress in layers and provide outerwear for fluctuating temperatures. Each child will have a cubby and hook on which to hang jackets/bags. Each child should bring a change of clothes & socks in a plastic bag to be stored in the classroom. This ensures that your child will have a change of clothes in the event of a spill or toileting accident.

All clothing and personal items should be labeled with your child's full name including jackets, hats and gloves. Staff/Volunteers are not responsible for lost/stolen money, valuables, or personal items. With the exception of show-and-tell, all personal toys, games, and electronics must remain at home.

Little Learners Preschool will issue a tote bag (new students only) in lieu of a backpack to be used for transporting projects, notes, and class essentials. Students will use their preschool tote bag throughout their entire preschool experience. You may personalize this bag to make it easily recognizable; however, please ensure that all decorations are washable. Families are to wash their child's preschool tote bag on a regular basis.

*Note: Turn in any paperwork, supply donations, etc., directly to the instructor. Staff do not check student bags for such items.*

## Family Involvement

Family involvement in Little Learners Preschool is important as it allows parents/guardians to gain an understanding of the program while showing the child that they value the school, the instructors, and the classroom community.

If you have a special holiday tradition or celebration that you would like to share with the class, please contact your instructors. Our children enjoy learning about various holidays and celebrations.

Parents/Guardians who have a special talent or career and would like to provide a preschool learning experience may contact their preschool instructor to make arrangements. We would love to work with you to schedule a visit.

Parents/Guardians who would like to visit the classroom should contact their preschool instructors to make arrangements for a visit. All other visitors must contact the Recreation Supervisor at (847) 996-6808 to schedule an appointment outside of preschool hours.

Throughout the school year, preschoolers will participate in special events and celebrations.

Details regarding each celebration will be posted in the Brightwheel App and noted on the monthly calendar. Family events may be modified or not offered due to gathering restrictions.

We appreciate your understanding as we work to make any modified celebrations safe and memorable for our preschoolers.

## Brightwheel App

Daily communication is completed through the Brightwheel App. The Brightwheel App can be downloaded to your mobile phone or accessed on the web.

You will receive an invitation to the Brightwheel App via either the email and/or phone number on your registration account. Preschool staff will share announcements, photographs, and summaries of class activities with families via the Brightwheel App. Check Brightwheel regularly to remain informed of class happenings.



## Preschool Closings

Little Learners Preschool will be cancelled if Hawthorn District #73 closes for the entire day due to inclement weather. The Park District will post class cancellations on the Brightwheel App. Class cancellations by the park district will result in a program credit or make-up day.

If classes are cancelled for non-weather related reasons, families will be notified via the Brightwheel App.

## Class Arrival/Dismissal

Escort your child into the building and enter the preschool wing through the security door. You will receive the security code via email prior to the first day of school. This code should only be shared with the authorized drop-off/pick-up individuals on your list(not children).

Upon arrival, check your child in via the Brightwheel App and wait in the hallway outside of your child's classroom. Instructors will open their doors promptly at the class start time. Make direct and verbal contact with the preschool instructor when dropping the child off. Arrival activities are an important component of the daily schedule. Arriving promptly to preschool ensures that your child can fully participate in the arrival sequence and also reduces class disruptions. Classroom doors will be locked after the start of class.

Children may experience separation anxiety at the beginning of the session or throughout the year. Children usually do best when parents/caregivers project a confident, positive attitude and depart with a quick goodbye. If your child experiences difficulty at drop off, you may wait in the lobby or your vehicle; not in the preschool wing. Class instructors can typically comfort an upset child and engage him/her in an activity. If the child has not been comforted or engaged in activities, the instructor will contact the parent/guardian to provide an update.

Children must be picked-up and signed out through the Brightwheel App promptly at the end of class by a parent/guardian or an authorized individual. Authorized individuals must be listed in the Brightwheel App and be able to present a valid state identification card or driver's license. Your child's instructor will come out into the hallway a few minutes before dismissal to give parents a very brief overview of the day's activities and keep you up to date about upcoming events, reminders, etc. Please be prompt in dropping off and picking up your child. If an emergency occurs, please notify the instructor through the Brightwheel App or call the registration office at (847) 996-6800.

**Late Pick-Up Fee:** After a five-minute grace period, you will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$10.00 for every 10 minutes you are late in picking up your child. This is a per child fee. The late fee must be paid in full at the registration office before the child can return to the program.

## Preschool Daily Schedule

The Little Learners Preschool daily schedule is designed to incorporate individual, small group, and large group interaction between children and their peers/teachers. The children are kept active and engaged throughout their day. All aspects of the curriculum, as well as classroom centers and toys, are carefully selected to encourage exploratory learning and social distancing (when possible/as needed). Children will participate in choice time, small group learning, art, circle time, snack, and fine/gross motor activities.



## Classroom Interest Centers

Little Learners Preschool classrooms are equipped with activity centers designed to create defined interest areas that limit distractions, foster more complex play, and promote collaboration and socialization. Within each classroom, you will find the following:

Dramatic Play	Math & Manipulatives	Science & Discovery
Art Exploration	Sand & Water Table (Sensory)	Technology / Writing
Library	Learning Toys & Games	Music & Movement

Each classroom contains a sink for handwashing and hand sanitizing stations/bottles.

## Restrooms

Children enrolled in Little Learners Preschool (three & four year old programs) must be able to use the restroom independently. The routine use of diapers or pull-ups is not permitted. Children should wear clothing that aids in bathroom independence (avoid difficult belts, buttons, and one-piece outfits). Children are able to use the restroom as needed and, if necessary, will be prompted by a teacher to take a restroom break. Children do not need to wait for classroom restroom breaks. Occasionally preschoolers will have a toileting accident. If your child has a toileting accident while at school and cannot change his/her clothes independently, a parent/caregiver will be contacted for assistance. Preschool instructors are not responsible for changing soiled clothing; however, they will do their best to verbally direct the child and follow-up with a phone call home. A parent/guardian or caring adult must be available within fifteen minutes.

**Note:** Children enrolled in two-year-old preschool may wear diapers or pull-ups to class. If your child needs to be changed while at class, a parent/caregiver will be contacted for assistance. Instructors are not responsible for changing soiled clothing. A parent/guardian or caring adult must be available within fifteen minutes.

## Field Trips

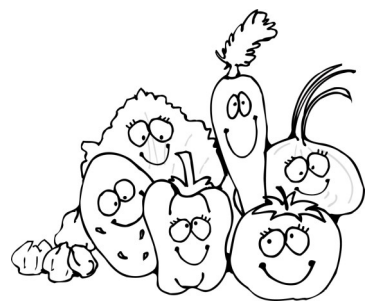
Little Learners Preschool will offer periodic field trips throughout the year. As these trips get closer, permission slips and field trip fee information will be sent home. There will be no preschool on field trip days for children who are unable or choose not to attend the field trip.

## Birthdays

We recognize that birthdays are an important event and our instructors will recognize each birthday child in a special way. Children may bring non-edible treats to share with their classmates (e.g., toys, bubbles, trinkets, etc.). Children may distribute personal party invitations only when all classmates will be included in the celebration. Families are asked to make alternate arrangements for invitation distribution when possible.

## Snacks / Lunches

Little Learners Preschoolers must bring a small, nutritious snack on a daily basis to enjoy mid-morning. Preschool Enrichment and Extend the Play students must bring a sack lunch and beverage. Snacks and lunches cannot be refrigerated or microwaved. If the snack/lunch you send requires a spoon or fork, please be sure to include it in your baggie. Sample snacks: applesauce, baby carrots, banana, crackers, graham crackers, mini muffins, orange slices, pretzels, etc.



## Food Allergies / Dietary Restrictions

Indicate your child's food allergies and/or dietary restrictions in the Brightwheel App. Notify your preschool instructor of any food allergies and/or dietary restrictions. If your child has food allergies, a Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan signed by the child's physician must be submitted prior to participation.

## Medication

We make reasonable accommodations in our programs and camps for individuals with disabilities including staff dispensing or administering medication in appropriate instances. All requests for medication dispensing or administration will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Park District.

Whenever possible, medications should be dispensed or administered by parents or guardians before or after programs and camps. Please note that the Park District does not have medical providers (e.g., licensed medical professionals such as doctors, nurses, etc.) on staff. In some circumstances, the administration of medication cannot be performed by Park District staff because of specific and/or complex physician or manufacturer instructions, because a request requires medical diagnosis or judgment from our lay staff, and/or because the medication requires invasive procedures.

Your request for medication dispensing/administration will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and assigned staff will follow-up with you regarding any questions or regarding any requests that cannot be accommodated, including providing you with the reasons the request(s) cannot be accommodated.

If there is a need for dispensing/administration of medication during a minor's participation in a District program, the parent/guardian should follow the steps outlined in the Medication Dispensing/Administration Information and Process for Parents and Legal Guardians Form available online at [vhparkdistrict.org](http://vhparkdistrict.org). If you have questions or need further assistance, please contact the District's ADA Compliance Officer at (847) 996-6802.

## Health Policy

To maintain a healthy preschool environment, keep your child home if they have experienced any of these symptoms within the past 72 hours: fever of 100.4 or higher, shortness of breath, muscle aches, loss of taste, headache, chills, sore throat, cough, runny nose, rash, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, fever, earache, or any communicable disease. All children must be symptom-free within 72 hours of attending class.

To report an absence, please use the Brightwheel App.

Parents/guardians whose children develop communicable diseases; i.e. chicken pox, head lice, pertussis, COVID, etc. must notify the Recreation Supervisor as soon as the child is diagnosed. The name of the affected child is not released; however, parents are notified of the occurrence of a contagious illness. A doctor's note may be required for your child to return to class.

Should a child become ill at preschool, parents/guardians will be notified immediately so that the child can be picked up. Parent/guardian must pick up child immediately after being notified of their health condition or make arrangements for an approved caregiver to do so. If we cannot reach a parent, the emergency contact will be called. The symptomatic child will remain away from classmates and under supervision until picked up.

## Scholastic Book Club

Your child will receive Scholastic Book Club fliers throughout the school year. All orders must be submitted online by the advertised deadline. Participation in the Scholastic Book Club program allows our program to purchase books, furniture and materials for our classrooms while allowing you to expand your home library. Online ordering information and our class code will be sent home with your child's first Scholastic Book Club flyer.

## Box Tops for Education

No more clipping... Box Tops for Education has gone digital. Download the mobile app, select Vernon Hills Preschool as your school, shop as you normally would, and then scan your receipt to find participating products. The app will automatically credit our school account with your Box Top earnings.

## Behavior Management

Little Learners Preschool classrooms are intentional communities where children feel safe, help one another, and feel a part of the group. An important component of our curriculum involves nurturing social competence where children gain an understanding of how to treat others and how they want to be treated by others. They will begin to understand friendships while acquiring the skills needed to cooperate, negotiate, and problem solve. Instructors set limits and explain consequences in order to help the children understand why rules are needed. Children assist in establishing classroom rules with a focus on maintaining safety, respecting the rights and feelings of others, and caring for the classroom and its materials.

Instructors promote self-regulation skills and help children experience the benefits of managing their feelings and behavior. The children will learn how to control impulses by not acting (behavioral self-regulation), plan and problem solve (cognitive self-regulation), and manage feelings (emotional self-regulation). The ability to understand one's own feelings and the feelings of others, to regulate and express emotions appropriately, to control impulses, tolerate frustration, follow limits and expectations, and delay gratification are critical to a child's success in school and in life.

Instructors employ a variety of strategies including speaking with children and/or modeling skills. They implement positive guidance strategies including offering choices, employing redirection, altering the environment, and reflection. All behavior management strategies are suggested to the children in a gentle, positive, and discreet manner. Instructors will maintain open communication with families to work through behavior concerns. If necessary, a meeting will be scheduled to discuss a child's behavior. The Recreation Supervisor is available to assist in these meetings. The Vernon Hills Park District reserves the right to suspend or dismiss any participant whose behavior disrupts the program or endangers him/herself or other participants and/or staff. A parent/guardian or authorized individual must be available to pick up the child within fifteen minutes.

## Code of Conduct

All participants and their parents/caregivers must adhere to the District's Code of Conduct.

1. Show respect to all participants, staff, and volunteers. Participants should follow program rules and take direction from staff.
2. Refrain from using abusive, inappropriate, or foul language.
3. Refrain from threatening or causing bodily harm to self, other participants, or staff.
4. Show respect for equipment, supplies, and facilities.
5. Not possess any weapons.

## Inclusion Services

The Vernon Hills Park District is committed to promoting and encouraging positive interactions among participants with and without disabilities. Staff members are available to assist participants with accommodations needed for success in and enjoyment of our programs in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Once registered, contact the Recreation Supervisor at (847) 996-6808 at least ten days prior to the start of the preschool year to discuss your child's special needs and how the district may accommodate those needs. Should a request for inclusion services arise throughout the year, please contact the Recreation Supervisor as soon as possible.

Little Learners Preschool works together with SRALC (Special Recreation Association of Central Lake County) to provide additional services for children identified with special needs.

## Early Childhood Screenings

Little Learners Preschool is committed to working with your family to prepare your child for elementary school. On occasion, preschool staff will refer families to their local school district for a screening. Staff will be part of your support team as long as a signed consent & authorization to release information is on file with the park district. A release from the school district or provider will also serve this purpose.

## Conferences and Progress Reports

Should you have any questions/concerns regarding your child's participation in preschool, contact your preschool instructor.

Two-year-old students will receive a Preschool Assessment report in November and May. Parent/Teacher conferences will be scheduled as needed/by request.

Three-year-old Tu/Th and M/W/F students will receive a Preschool Assessment report in November and May. Parent/Teacher conferences will be scheduled on November 21, 2023.

Four-year-old M/W/F and Tu/W/Th students will receive a Preschool Assessment report in November and April. Parent/Teacher conferences will be scheduled on April 24, 2024. Our four-year-old morning preschool classes will not meet on April 24th.



# Daily Supply Checklist

## ☐ *Water Bottle*

Send a reusable water bottle (12-ounce minimum) labeled with your child's name to preschool each day to help ensure that your child stays hydrated. Staff will assist children in refilling water bottles as needed.

## ☐ *Gym Shoes and Socks*

Gym shoes are recommended to permit full participation in preschool activities; avoid sandals, flip-flops, dress shoes, etc.

## ☐ *Clean, Comfortable, Washable Clothing*

Children should dress in clean, comfortable, washable clothing as many preschool activities are messy.

## ☐ *Snack (All Students) / Lunch (Preschool Enrichment & Extend The Play Students)*

All students should pack a small, nutritious snack to be enjoyed mid-morning. Preschool Enrichment students and those in Extend the Play classes should also pack a nutritious sack lunch. Snacks/lunches cannot be refrigerated/microwaved.

## ☐ *Little Learners Preschool Tote Bag*

Each child will receive a Little Learners Preschool tote bag labeled with his/her name (new students only). Students should bring their tote bag to class on a daily basis. Families must wash their child's tote bag on a regular basis. *Note: Turn in any paperwork or notes directly to preschool staff. Staff do not check tote bags for such items.*

### *Label All Personal Belongings*

Staff/Volunteers are not responsible for lost/stolen money, valuables, or personal items. All personal toys, games, electronics, and items of high importance or must remain at home.