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Parent Handbook

# 2012-2013

Revised

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**GENERAL INFORMATION:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ages Served | 12 months – 5 years |
| Emergency Closings | CLOSED per MDC actions |
| Calendar Year  | July 1st- June 30th  |
| Vacation Days (no payments due) | August 6th , 2011- August17th, 2012December 21st , 2011 - January 4th , 2012 |
| Days of Operation | Monday – Friday  |
| Hours of OperationBefore CareAfter Care | 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.  7 a.m. – 8 a.m. ($5.00 per week)4 p.m. – 6 p.m. ($5.00 per hour/ weekly) |
| Late Pick Up Fees | $5.00 for first five minutes, $1 per minute afterward |
| Registration Fee | Annual fee- $150.00 nonrefundable |
| Weekly payment | MDC Students $122 (minimum of 6 semester credits)MDC Employees $137Community $172Weekly rates apply year-round including teacher planning days, legal holidays and any student absences**.** Note: The school participates in various programs which offer  subsidies. The subsidies may vary depending upon eligibility  and attendance. Credits for these programs will be reflected  on the families’ invoices. |
| Payment Schedule | Due each Friday for the upcoming week |
| Daily Meals | Breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack |
| Toys | Leave at home, please |
| Clothing | **Closed shoes required**Additional clothing neededAll items must be labeled |
| EnrollmentTermination  | Non-payment; excessive late paymentsNon-compliance with conduct policy as stated Needs unable to be met by schoolPhysical/verbal abuse by parent |
| Field Trips | Must be paid in advance  |
| Parent Conferences | Twice yearly: December and May; others can be  Scheduled |



Dear Pre-School Lab Parents,

Welcome to the Miami Dade College (MDC) School of Education. The School of Education (SOE) is extremely fortunate to have a state of the art Exploration Station Preschool Lab t North Campus, which serves the students, faculty, and staff of MDC, as well as, the community. The Lab is a very important component of the academic Early Childhood program at MDC and has always been looked to as a pioneer in Early Childhood Education. The dual language program was the first of its kind.

This year, we have become a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)-focused Pre-School Lab. There is only one other in the United States. Being a STEM Pre-School Lab means that we use learning opportunities to have students observe, classify, compare and contrast, and problem solve. For example, when children state that they came to school in a cloud, the teacher will take the opportunity to teach about fog. Bugs, rain, our beautiful garden, butterflies, blocks, etc. all become “teachable moments” for learning about the universe around us and its principles.

Most of the staff at the Pre-School Lab are graduates of MDC and a significant number are now continuing their education. The SOE is very proud of the dedication of the director and staff to the profession and their pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning at the Pre-School Lab.

We are excited about the opportunities we have available for you. Housed at the InterAmerican Campus, the School of Education offers courses and programs at convenient times and locations. Our experienced faculty helps aspiring teachers develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to become excellent practitioners. The School of Education offers College Credit Certificates (CCC), Associate in Arts (AA) degrees, Associate in Science (AS) degrees, and Baccalaureate (BS) degrees. Our six baccalaureate degrees (Early Childhood Education (Birth to Grade 3), (Exceptional Student Education (K-12), and Secondary programs (6-12) in Mathematics Education, and Biology Education, Chemistry Education, Earth/Space Science Education, and Physics Education) lead to teacher certification from the Florida Department of Education. We also provide professional development opportunities for practicing professionals and courses for teachers working on certification or certification renewal.

May your relationship with MDC and the Pre-School Lab be positive and rewarding!

Sincerely,

Dr. Susan Neimand

Director, School of Education

**Miami Dade College School of Education Pre-School Lab**

We are glad that you have chosen MDC School of Education Pre-School Lab for your child’s education. We appreciate your commitment and confidence in our ability to educate and care for your children. We have an open door policy and are happy to have you stop in, observe your child’s classroom, and participate in our program.

This handbook of important information is for you to read and to refer to during your child’s early years of learning. Once you have read the information, please complete, sign, and return the Pre-School Copy of the Handbook Agreement Form on page 20 to the Pre-School Lab Office for our records. By signing, you acknowledge that you have read the policies and procedures of the Pre-School Lab. Note: The Parent Handbook may be amended by MDC and its agents as the needs of the school change.

**Mission of Miami Dade College**

The mission of Miami Dade College is to provide accessible, affordable, high-quality education by keeping the learner’s needs at the center of decision-making and working in partnership with its dynamic, multicultural community.

**Mission of MDC Pre-School Lab**

The mission of the Miami Dade College School of Education Pre-School Lab is to provide quality care and education for the children of Miami Dade College students, faculty, staff, and for members of the community. The Pre-School Lab is also used as a training facility for child care professionals and Early Childhood Education degree candidates.

**Philosophy**

We believe in the value of human diversity and the fair treatment of all people. Our primary goal is to provide a nurturing environment that supports all children as they become creative, independent, responsible, fully-functioning, self-directed individuals who have a strong sense of self and accomplishment. Secondly, as adults, we must strive to continue learning and growing in our relationships with others to role model a peaceful environment and surround the children with understanding and warmth.

**Miami Dade College**

**Pre-School Lab**

North Campus

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Miami, Florida 33167

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Director, Pre-School Lab

 Yolanda Borroto, M.S.

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**Miami Dade College**

**School of Education**

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**Miami Dade College**

**School of Education**

North Campus

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Chair, Early Childhood Education

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**Program Overview**

Our developmentally appropriate program is child-centered and based on best practices research in Early Childhood Education. Our belief is that the best way for children to learn is through **play**, and our classrooms reflect this belief by providing a planned environment that is designed to stimulate children’s interest.   Our individualized educational approach meets each child’s different and unique needs and interests.

The program focuses on the child’s cognitive, social-emotional, psychomotor, language and communication, and creative development. Learning centers encourage children to choose freely from a wide range of play and learning experiences, and help them recognize, understand, and express their own emotions as well as to sympathize with the emotions of others.

We use the *High Scope Curriculum* for all age groups. Children learn best through hands-on experiences with people, materials, events, and ideas; this principle, validated by research, is the basis of *High Scope’s* approach to teaching and learning. On-going observation of children is documented and shared with parents through classroom bulletin board displays, reports, newsletters, and parent conferences.  Our program enables children to reach their fullest potential.

# Objectives

# The daily schedule provides children with opportunities to make meaningful choices and actively learn in their environment. Children’s time is spent in learning centers, group activities such as creative movement, music, storytelling, and dramatization. Field trips are also part of the pre-school children's experiences. Days are planned so children will:

* feel safe, nurtured, loved, and respected
* have a wide variety of age appropriate materials and toys
* participate in stimulating, interactive activities, and hands-on experiences
* join in activities willingly without feeling pressured
* have predictable routines that include active and quiet times
* make choices
* solve problems and think critically
* are allowed to make mistakes and can laugh about it
* have parents as partners
* know that their unique abilities and cultural backgrounds are honored
* are in small class size with low teacher ratios
* receive individual attention and affection
* develop satisfying relationships with other children and adults
* develop self-discipline
* experience successes in order to develop a positive self-image
* learn to respect the personal and property rights of others
* develop intellectual, physically, creatively, socially, and emotionally

**Administration and Staff**

The MDC SOE Pre-School Lab has a Director, an Assistant Director, and Staff who work collaboratively with the MDC Director of the School of Education and the Chair of Early Childhood Education.

**Director**

Yolanda Borroto earned a Master’s degree in early childhood education and directed an NAEYC accredited center that serves 125 children, infants through Pre-K, for twenty years. She is a strong advocate of high quality in early childhood education and teachers professional development. Her community work includes the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe, South Florida Association for Young Children, Florida Association for the Education of Young Children, Florida Children’s Forum and Young Children with Special Needs and Disabilities Council. Yolanda also serves as an early childhood education adjunct here at Miami Dade College since 2003.

**Assistant to the Director**

 Zvia Dover has a Master’s degree in Early Childhood Education, and she is an experienced preschool director. She is a former mentor teacher, and an experienced early childhood trainer. She regularly presents in conferences. .

**Staff**

Our Pre-School Lab hires well-qualified staff to work with the children. Each classroom has a full-time staff member who holds, at a minimum, a Florida Child Care Professional Credential or an Associate in Science degree in Early Childhood as well as experience in early childhood centers. All full-time and part-time staff satisfy the Department of Children and Families 45-hour training requirement. Each staff member has passed the required State of Florida background check. All staff complete a minimum of twelve hours of in-service training each year in addition to our monthly staff training sessions. MDC facilitates continuous professional development opportunities for the staff.

Additional qualified assistants support our regular staff and come to us through the MDC Work-Study Program. Students from MDC School of Education classes and other college classes may visit the classrooms to complete their course-required observations. These students observe and may interact with the children, but are not caregivers counted towards the student-teacher ratios.

If the Pre-School Lab has turnover in staff, we will always inform you about the change in personnel and ask for your support during the transition period.

**Admission Procedures: Registration, Tuition, and Fees**

Admission Procedures

The Pre-School Lab admits children ages 12 months (walking) to 5 years of age. MDC and all its agencies do not discriminate based on race, gender, religion, or ethnic background. Parents/guardians need to complete a registration form that includes information on: family background, emergency contacts, health issues, statement of fees, attendance policies, behavior management, and provide parental releases for photography, videotaping, and field trip participation. All registration forms must be kept current; if you move, change emails, change telephone or cell phone numbers, **please** contact the Pre-School Lab at once. Our school year runs from August to June with closings based on the calendar for Miami Dade College and teacher planning days based on Miami Dade County Public School’s calendar.

Registration Fee

A school year registration fee of $150.00 is required for **each child** at the time of registration and/or enrollment renewal. This is **non-refundable fee** and is not part of the tuition fees.

Tuition Fees

Tuition fees are set by MDC, and we constantly strive to assure modest rates. Taken into account are low student-teacher ratios that ensure high quality learning; as suggested by NAEYC.

Tuition Rates

The tuition rates for 2011-2012 are as follows and apply to the hours of operation of **8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.:**

MDC Students\* $122 per week

MDC Employees $137 per week

Community $172 per week

In addition, on-site before and after care is available from 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.; and from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. This additional service of care is charged weekly at the rate of $5.00 per hour/per week.

**Payment of weekly rates apply year-round including teacher planning days, legal holidays and any student absences (including illness).**

**\***To take advantage of the MDC student rate, the parent/guardian must be enrolled in MDC courses for a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester. **A copy of a paid class schedule must be submitted to the Pre-School Lab Office at the beginning of each semester as proof of enrollment.** If proof is not submitted, the community rate will be applied automatically.

Sibling Discount

Families with two children enrolled in the Pre-School Lab will receive a discount. In such cases, the first child’s tuition will follow the regular rates; additional children will have their tuition discounted by $10 per week.

Payment Schedule

**Tuition payment is due before service is rendered**. Payment is due **each Friday prior to the starting week.**  **Late payments will incur a penalty fee of $15.00, per day, to be applied to all accounts where tuition is not paid on/ before the due date.** Accounts that become in the arrears by 2 weeks are subject to suspension from the program and are subject to termination after 30 days. Accounts that have been terminated for non-payment are subject to a new registration fee. Children that have been suspended or terminated for non-payment will not be allowed to return to the center until FULL payment and ALL late fees have been paid and the account brought up to date.

**No account may go into deficit.** THERE ARE ABSOLUTELY NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY.

Tuition payments may be made directly at the preschool by check or money order only. **NO CASH** **PAYMENTS ARE ACCEPTED** at the preschool. Tuition payments must be placed in the payment drop-box. Receipts are distributed on a monthly basis, but may be issued earlier upon request. For your added convenience, payments may also be made at the bursar’s office by check, money order, cash, or credit card. Year-end statements for income tax purposes can be provided by MDC.

Any adjustments necessary due to *extended* closure of school due to natural disasters will be dealt with as necessary.

Parents receiving subsidies are required to pay the difference between their tuition rate and the subsidy. For example, if your tuition rate is $122 per week and your subsidy pays for $80 per week, you are responsible for the $42 difference per week. No tuition credit will be given for absences (even due to illness) or vacations.

Late Pick Up and Fees

In case of late pickup, the parent must call the Pre-School Lab at (305) 237-1357, NO LATER THAN 5:30 P.M. The phone call allows the Director and/or classroom teacher to reassure your child that she/he has not been abandoned. A late fee of **$5.00** for the first five minutes and $1.00 for each minute after 6 pm will be assessed. Chronic lateness may result in your child being dropped from the program. **This policy will be strictly enforced.**

**If your child has not been picked up within one hour of closing time, the proper authorities will be called which may include: Miami-Dade County Police and/or the Department of Children and Families.**

**Attendance: Arrival and Dismissal Procedures**

Arrival Procedures

**All children must be brought to their classrooms escorted by their parents and signed in on a daily basis.** Arrival is the time for parents, children, and staff to start the day off by greeting one another, sharing information and settling in. Family members, parents, guardians, or relatives must be listed on the emergency contact forms to be considered pre-approved for drop-off and pick-up. Children should arrive by 8:30 a.m. in order to take advantage of the entire morning program. ***Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) children must arrive and be signed in no later than 8:15 a.m. VPK classes will start promptly*** ***at 8:30 a.m.*** ***For******VPK students, breakfast will be served between 7:45 a.m. and 8:15 a.m***. In order to facilitate the transition at arrival, please encourage your child to: say good morning, sign-in (VPK ONLY), and wash his /her hands, leave toys and/or inappropriate books in your car.

Parking

Parents may park in the designated parking spaces. Please **do not block the emergency pass** through lane or park in front of the building.

Dismissal Procedures

**All children must be signed out on a daily basis**. Departure from the center is a time for reconnecting, sharing information, and gathering items to go home. Please call ahead if you are going to be late (see “Late Pick Up and Fees” section). Only those people listed on your emergency contact form may pick up your child. Written permission for an exception will be permitted if the *parent* sends a handwritten note or fax to (305) 237-1592. You must also call to inform us that the fax was sent. Please let these people know that ***we will ask them for a photo*** ***I.D***. Please check your emergency contact form to make sure it is complete and updated. Remember that the person picking up your child must be at least 18 years of age in order to sign him/her out.

VPK and/or CDS Sign-In/ Attendance Verification:

Daily: Your child must be signed in upon arrival and signed out at dismissal every day by the adult who drops off

and/or picks up. The time and full signature, NO INITIALS ALLOWED, must be written on the attendance sheet. This is a requirement of the VPK and CDS programs.

Attendance/ Absences:

Regular attendance is a requirement of tuition subsidy programs. It is important that your child attends every day in order to receive the maximum benefit of this program so that your child is prepared to succeed in school.

Please note: It is a State requirement that parents/guardians comply with the center’s attendance policy as well as any of its other policies and procedures. The state VPK program allows a center to dismiss a child who does not follow these rules.

VPK and CDS Attendance Requirements:

a. VPK children must arrive in classroom no later than 8:15 AM daily.

b. WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION MUST BE PROVIDED FOR EVERY EXCUSED ABSENCE. It is the parents’ responsibility to comply with this requirement in order to receive full subsidy payments. Please see the office if you have **any questions** regarding your child’s subsidy.

While receiving State subsidies, any more than three (3) unexcused absences per month are considered excessive. We will discuss this with the parent / guardian.

 **Birthdays**

Birthdays are special times to celebrate. Please speak with your child’s teacher regarding birthday celebration guidelines specific to his / her classroom. If you do not celebrate birthdays, please inform the Director and your child’s teacher.

Please be considerate of all children's feelings when a birthday is to be celebrated outside of school. If the entire class is not invited, distribution of the invitations is up to the family. The Pre-School Lab teachers will happily distribute invitations if the entire class is invited.

**Child Abuse and Neglect**

**Staff members are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Please see the brochure from the Department of Children and Families for more information.**

**Communication: Home-School Connection**

A strong home-school connection ensures that the child will benefit greatly from their school experiences. We support families by providing information and support that connects the home and school so that your child can develop his/her fullest potential. There are many ways a parent may become involved at our Pre-School Lab.

### Parent-Teacher Communication

* Bulletin boards in front of each classroom
* Activity documentation within the classrooms
* Parent-Teacher conferences\*
* Newsletters
* Informal arrival and dismissal sharing

\*Parent conferences are scheduled twice per year; in November and in April. Please see your child’s teacher to schedule specific dates and times. For more ways to connect home and school, please see the section under “Join Us!”

**Cultural Sensitivity Policy**

MDC Pre-School Lab is committed to diversity and cultural sensitivity. We do not discriminate based on race, gender, religion, or ethnic origin. Many cultural events are incorporated in our program, such as the celebration of birthdays and holidays. Families who do not participate in these celebrations at home and wish their children to be excused from such celebrations need only to speak to the Director of the Pre-School Lab. We will honor the wishes of each family with sensitivity and diligence.

Culture and family traditions are a part of our regular learning experiences. Families are invited to share their culture and traditions, especially foods and recipes that are enjoyed at home and at family celebrations. We will adopt these ideas into our curriculum and routines.

**Discipline Policy**

We believe that children learn by doing. Conscious discipline, guidance regarding appropriate behavior, is our method of teaching children self-control and self-discipline. At MDC SOE Pre-School Lab, discipline does not take the form of a punishment. Children encounter situations in their everyday environment that require them to problem-solve. We provide a safe environment in which your child can have a safe outlet to handle these situations in a positive and productive way. Please refer to the DCF guides attached to your enrollment documents for more specific information on discipline.

**Dress**

Children are expected to be dressed in comfortable clothing appropriate for active play according to the weather. Children work in the garden and many other “messy” activities as part of our hands-on curriculum, they **will** get dirty. Please do not send them in clothes reserved for special occasions. In addition, all children need an extra set of labeled clothing left at school. Please place this set of clothing in a plastic bag labeled with the child's name on the outside. **Please dress your child in safe, close-toed shoes such as tennis shoes or sneakers for safety.**

Lost clothing is a problem most of us cannot afford. Help us and help yourself by clearly marking your child's name on jackets, sweaters and changes of clothing.

Small hair ornaments are not recommended for infants and toddlers, as they can fall out and pose as a choking hazard. In cases where children are old enough to wear beads in their hair, please make sure that the beads are secure and will not fall out.

**Emergencies**

Closing

In case of an emergency closing during the school day, parents will be notified by email or telephone. Parents are asked to pick-up their children within one hour of being notified. The Pre-School Lab follows MDC schedules and directives, therefore, if MDC announces over the radio, TV, or MDC website that it will close due to weather emergency or other conditions, the Pre-School Lab will also close. We urge each family to have a plan for emergency closing during school hours. Please make sure that our office has your current emergency contact information.

Fire Drills

The Pre-School Lab conducts fire drills once a month at different times during the day to make sure that we are prepared in case of a fire.

Lockdowns

In case of a lockdown, our first responsibility is the safety of the children. We will not release children to anyone without proper identification. Please register with MDC’s emergency system so that you are informed of procedures.

**Family Expectations**

It is inappropriate for any child, family member or guardian, to be physically violent, verbally abusive, or engage in disruptive behavior toward another child, parent/ guardian, relative of an enrolled child, or Pre-School Lab personnel. This policy includes sexual harassment. For the protection of the children and Pre-School Lab personnel, such conduct will not be tolerated and any person engaged in such behavior will be immediately removed from the premises by either an administrator or local law enforcement. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior, by child, parent, guardian, or relative of an enrolled child may be the basis for termination of the child’s enrollment.

**Generous Donations- Thank you!**

Donations are gladly accepted at the Pre-School Lab. If you would like to make a donation, please see the classroom teacher or Pre-School Lab Director and a “wish list” of recommended items will be provided to you. All large donations should be given to the Director. She will assign the donations to the appropriate classrooms.

In addition, we can always use: “gently” used toys, books, buttons, greeting cards, purses, ribbons, calendars, tiles, dramatic play props, spools, phones, jewelry, dress-up costumes, collage materials, and paper/ plastic recyclables.

**Health and Safety Policy**

### Health Care Documents: Immunizations / Physicals

The Pre-School Lab only accepts children into our program with a current physical examination (DCF 3040-yellow form) and an up-to-date immunization card (DCF 680- blue form). No child is allowed to attend if the physical or immunizations forms are outdated. **It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that their child’s health records are current and accurate.**

##### Accidents

All accidents, no matter how small, are reported by the teachers or Director to the parent on the appropriate form. The parent will receive a phone call for serious accidents/ injuries and for all accidents/ injuries above the neck. Parents will be asked to sign the form, return it, and the form will be kept on file. In case of severe emergency, we will call our campus Public Safety Department (who then calls “911”) and then the parent(s).

Parents /guardians are responsible for and expected to share any accidents and injuries that occur off the pre-school premises so that when the child comes to school with bruises or injuries we are knowledgeable about the situation.

Biting

Biting is a typipcal occurrence in children between the ages of 15- 36 months and is one way to express feelings and relieve tension. When a child is bitten, we respond by following normal accident procedures.

Our teachers work with the child to help him/ her understand that biting is not acceptable behavior. However, in cases of repeated occurrences, the Pre-School Director will work with the family to develop a behavior modification plan.

**Information About Toddler Care**

##### Primary Care

Each child will be assigned a primary caregiver who is responsible for the child’s well-being in the classroom and charting the child’s progress; for communicating information and concerns to parents; and for that child’s well-being in the classroom. Work schedules of all staff will be posted and arrangements for conferences should be made with the lead teacher.

Curriculum for the Toddler

Children in the toddler classrooms follow a daily schedule which is posted. Teachers plan developmentally appropriate experiences daily, focusing on the individual and differentiated needs of the children, and work with the

children individually as well as in small and large groups. We place great emphasis on routines and self-help skills. We also assist the family’s efforts in toilet training. Let us know when your child is ready to begin.

Diapers

Parents are required to provide an ample supply of diapers and wipes. The preschool does not store any diapering items.

Food

At one year of age, children are introduced to new foods and follow our regular lab menu, including whole milk, unless medical restrictions are noted by a physician. Meals are provided with portion size as outlined in our food program. Mothers who are breast-feeding are encouraged to come during meal times. Please speak to the Director for more information.

 **Join Us!**

PTA

Our parents are very involved, and we are all partners when it comes to your children! They help organize fund-raisers, field trips, amazing initiatives, and meet on a regular basis. They will communicate dates and times for you to become involved. Please join!

Parent Orientation/ Open House

The Pre-School Lab will hold a Parent Orientation/Open House at the beginning of the school year. This is an opportunity to learn about the policies of the Pre-School Lab, meet your child’s teacher, and visit the classroom for a “model” day.

Parent Visits

Parent visits to the Pre-School Lab during the school hours are welcome and encouraged. There are also many opportunities during the year for parent help in projects and as chaperones on field trips. Parents may plan classroom visits with the teachers or you may visit any time you wish (see “Open Door Policy”).

### Parent-Child Resource Library

### We encourage each child to take a book home each evening to read at home with the family. Help your child select an age-appropriate book, check the book out, and take the time to read at home and discuss. Please return the book within two weeks so that others can also enjoy it. If you have any books that you would like to donate to the Pre-School Lab library, please leave them with the Director. We appreciate your contributions!

**Kaleidoscope of Activities**

#### Enrichment

Our Pre-School Lab is so fortunate to be part of MDC, and is able to take advantage of the many cultural offerings. Students have viewed musical programs and have been part of MDC events. Nature walks and visits to the different MDC departments are common at the preschool.

Our Pre-School Lab occasionally offers enrichment classes for preschoolers during the year. The classes are held once a week and include areas such as creative movement and yoga. These classes are in addition to our regular pre-school programming and, as such, an additional fee is charged for participation. Classes are limited in size and age groups.

Field Trips

Our program of activities includes visits to special places within the campus and the community. We take special precautions to insure safety. We will notify you in advance of planned field trips and will require your permission for your child to attend. Field trips are treated as enrichment programs and the cost for the entrance fees and transportation costs are above and beyond the tuition fees and must be paid prior to the child attending the field trip.

Parent chaperones are always welcome. Chaperones must be 21 years or older and are utilized on a first-come-first- serve basis. At times, parent chaperones that participate in field trips will be asked to pay for their own admission, and may be asked to drive their own vehicle to the place of visit. Only children who are enrolled at the time of the field trip are eligible to participate.

**Language and Culture**

Language and Culture

The Pre-School Lab families come from diverse backgrounds and speak different languages. At the Pre-School we will be sensitive to these linguistic and cultural needs. We encourage children developing their home language skills and the acquisition of a second language.

**Medication and Illness Policies**

#### Medication

***We will not administer any kind of medication to your child. When medication has to be given you are welcome to come and administer the medication yourself or you can schedule your child’s medication during family time.***

# Illness Policy

**Please do not send your child to school ill.** The Pre-School Lab operates under Florida State Childcare Licensing regulations that do not allow actively sick children to be in the classroom. The staff is trained in First Aid/ CPR and recognizes the signs of communicable disease and other illness.

If the child needs to be sent home because of illness, the parent will be notified and the child must be picked up within the hour. The Pre-School has only limited facilities to make your ill child comfortable and we must guard the health of others in the pre-school. When the parent cannot be reached, the person listed as an emergency contact by the parent will be called. The child will be released to that person. Re-admittance to the Pre-School Lab is allowed after 24 hours of normal temperature (below 99 degrees), and/or no other signs of illness for 24 hours, or by a doctor's signed statement.

A written statement of good health from a doctor will be required to return to the Pre-School Lab when:

1. A child has a diagnosed communicable disease (strep, head lice, pink eye, impetigo, etc.). We do not require a statement when a child has had chicken pox, but we will do a visual check to make sure all the pox are dried.
2. A child has undergone surgery or has been hospitalized.

Children returning with signs of illness or disease will be refused admittance. If a child is well enough to come to school, it is expected that s/he will participate in all activities.

Notification of Communicable Diseases

Parents are responsible for notifying the Director of the Pre-School Lab IMMEDIATELY upon learning that their child has a communicable disease. Parents of every child enrolled will be notified of communicable diseases that

occur in the Pre-School Lab. The Health Department will be notified within 48 hours of any suspected outbreak of noticeable communicable disease.

Too Cold, Too Hot

The Pre-School Lab believes in the need for fresh air and outdoor play. When it is too cold (below 50 degrees) or too hot above 98 degrees) outdoors, we provide alternate indoor activities.

Sunscreen and Sun Injury

Living in South Florida has made us all aware of the impact of the ultraviolet rays of the sun. Parents are urged to apply sunscreen on their children before they come to school. If a child does receive a sun injury, we will follow the Illness Policy.

Tooth Brushing

Each classroom will have a daily supervised tooth brushing activity that models and teaches good dental hygiene and prevents cross-contamination between children, toothbrushes, and toothpaste. To ensure proper hygiene each child will be given her/his own labeled toothbrush and toothpaste which will be stored in a holder or individually marked Ziploc bags and kept out of the reach of children when not in use. Toothbrushes will be changed every three months. Classroom staff will insure that toothbrushes are rinsed and stored properly after use.

**Nap and Rest Time**

The Pre-School Lab includes a quiet rest time as part of the children’s daily schedule. Some children may need sleep; others only rest. We try to accommodate each child’s rest needs. We want your child to feel comfortable during rest time. Please bring a small blanket or crib sheet and a beach towel for rest time. Large pillows are bulky and take up cubby space; however, you may send a small travel pillow if you wish. These items must be taken home each Friday to launder and brought back each Monday.

**Nutrition: Food Policies**

The Pre-School Lab serves breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. Daily menus provide a healthy and well-balanced diet. Portions and balances are in accordance with CCFP (Child Care Food Program) requirements. Children from 1 to 2 years are served whole milk. Substitutions can only be made with a doctor’s note.

1. Substitutions will be made for food that your physician confirms ***in*** ***writing*** are harmful to your child (allergies, cholesterol, etc.).
2. Religious requirements will be honored, as we are able.
3. Other meal substitutions must be healthy and/ or in line with our food program menu. **NO fast foods of any kind will be allowed.**

Breakfast is served beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 8:30 a.m. for the pre-school side; for the toddler side, breakfast begins at 8:30 am and ends at 9:00 a.m.; this time may vary for the younger groups. However, for VPK students, breakfast will be served between 8:00 a.m. and 8:15 a.m. Mealtimes are on a set schedule in accordance with CCFP guidelines.

**Special diets, including nutrient concentrates and supplements, may be served only upon written instruction from the child's physician**. No exceptions or substitutions will be made for children who simply do not care for an item. Each child will receive every item on the menu to encourage, teach, and model the consumption of a balanced meal. Food is never used to punish or to bribe, nor will a child be forced to eat every item presented.

Eating together is a social learning experience. Children and teachers eat together; teachers eat the same meal in order to demonstrate and role model appropriate eating behavior and manners, proper conversation techniques, and trying new and different foods in a family-style dining experience.

### **Open Door Policy**

Parents are always welcome and encouraged to visit our classrooms at any time. Open-door policy visits are an opportunity for parents to participate and observe their child’s behavior. However, if you wish to discuss your child’s progress, please make arrangements with your child’s teacher to schedule a parent-teacher conference.

**Personal Belongings**

Each child has a cubby with his/her name on it. This is a special place for each child’s jackets, extra clothes, blankets, and most treasured art projects. Please check your child's cubby each day and take home items such as important communication from teachers or administrators, clothes for laundering, and art work for display at home.

***Past experience has shown us that toys from home create many problems at school.*** There are four (4) things *we* *never* *allow* at the Pre-School Lab: guns, gum, candy, and money. ***Please leave personal belongings at home or in the car.***

Jewelry such as necklaces and hoop earrings can pose a threat to the safety of the children. We suggest that these items are saved for special occasions.

**The Pre-School Lab takes no responsibility for valuable items brought to school.**

**Pre-School Program**

We implement the *High Scope Curriculum* in the pre-school classrooms. The *High Scope Curriculum* is based on the principles of active learning and key experiences.  Our pre-school children are given opportunities to challenge themselves and advance their learning through art, science, music, literacy, blocks, sand and water, math, logic, language, and physical activities. We provide "hands-on" meaningful experiences that enrich the learning process. Children develop critical thinking skills by direct manipulation of the environment that surrounds them. As adults, we facilitate learning to enable the children to continue moving towards learning success. The children and teachers partner in the learning process. The teachers record and document daily observations and conduct assessments in order to plan for your child's interests and needs. In addition, we incorporate the Florida State Educational Standards (the Sunshine State Standards) of learning to align ourselves with Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Our curriculum meets the Florida state requirements of early learning standards. This year we are very excited to add a focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) into our curriculum. We have including a Science/Technology Lab and dedicated Art Room (please visit). Ask your teachers (and your child!) about STEM, and learn about how they are engaged in meaningful, hands-on, experiential, inquiry-based activities that teach them about the world!

**Quality Assurance**

To assure the implementation of best practice in Early Childhood Education, we use the Infant/Toddler and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ITERS and ECERS) to evaluate the Pre-School Lab space and furnishings, personal care routines, listening and talking, activities, interactions, program structure, and parent and staff interaction.

**Resources and Services**

Miami Dade College [www.mdc.edu](http://www.mdc.edu)

NAEYC [www.NAEYC.org](http://www.NAEYC.org)

High/Scope [www.High/Scope.org](http://www.High/Scope.org)

Office of Early Learning (VPK) [www.vpkflorida.org](http://www.vpkflorida.org) or 1-866-357-3239

VPK Parent Handbook <http://elc-fg.org/parents/voluntary_pre_k/>

Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-962-2873

Child Development Services 305-500-7100

Department of Children and Families 305-377-5006

Head Start 305-347-4622

Healthy Start—Mothers & Infants 786-845-0363

Miami Dade County Public Schools 305-238-6610

Poison Control 1-800-282-3171 or 911

WIC (Women, Infants and Children) 786-336-1300

**Student- Teacher Ratios**

Student-teacher ratios meet group size quality indicators as recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

* Toddlers from 1 to 2 years – 1 teacher to 5 children
* Toddlers from 24 to 30 months- 1 teacher to 6 children
* Young Pre-school children from 2 to 3 years – 1 teacher to 7 children
* Pre-school children who are 3 years old or older – 1 teacher to 10 children
* Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)classrooms (as regulated by the state) – 1 teacher to 10 children

**Disenrollment of Childcare Services**

The Pre-School Lab reserves the right to revok the enrollment of a child (ren) for any of the following reasons:

* Non-payment or excessive late payment of tuition fees
* Violation of the rules and regulations of the pre-school as outlined in this Parent Handbook and Agreement
* Physical and/or verbal abuse of staff or children by parent, child, guardian, or family member

**Transitions**

Transitioning from one classroom to another can be both an exciting and stressful time for young children as well as their families. We take measures to ensure that each child’s transition is an enjoyable experience by taking into consideration his or her chronological age, overall development, and teacher recommendations. Please see your child’s teacher for transition guidelines specific to your child’s age group and individual needs.

**Unusual Issues**

The Director and teachers are always on alert for unusual issues. These include: strangers on the property, unidentified packages, marks or bruises on children, etc. We report each of these to the proper authorities so that they can be addressed appropriately.

**Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten**

Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) is the state-sponsored pre-kindergarten program. In VPK, we continue our High/Scope curriculum which is aligned with Florida standards of early learning. We provide the opportunity for children to meet their own needs for their learning.  Florida VPK education standards, as with our curriculum framework, provide opportunities for learning in the following domains: physical health, motor development, social-emotional, language and communication, emergent literacy, cognitive development and general knowledge. The VPK program is the preparation for kindergarten. The Pre-School Lab has the Florida Department of Education published manual for the VPK standards. We encourage you to inquire about the standards and peruse the manual at your leisure.

The Pre-School Lab VPK program follows Miami Dade County Public School’s calendar including Teacher Planning Days and holidays. Your child will **not** receive funding from the State on these **non-instructional days**. Full tuition payment for these days is the responsibility of the parent. Please see the front office for further details.

\* Note: The State requirement for participation in the 540 hour VPK program is that the child must be four (4 years old) **on or before** **September 1st**  of the year he/she starts school; participation in the 300 hour summer VPK program requires that the child turn five (5 years old) ***on or before September 1st of the current kindergarten year***. Please see your director for more information on how to register your child.

**Water and Sand Play Policy**

All rooms are equipped with covered sand and water tables on wheels. This allows the tables to be used indoors or out. Tables are kept in the classrooms. Teachers provide close supervision to maintain good hygiene practices. Fresh water is used for each session of water play for a group of children and drained when the activity is complete. Clean sand is used and replaced frequently. Sand is securely covered when not in use.

**(E)Xceptional Students- Individuality**

Each child at the Pre-School Lab is a unique individual who will be loved and treasured for who they are by the teachers and other personnel. We recognize that each child has talent, intelligence, and is capable of learning. We strive to create the best learning environment and provide for the needs of each child. Toward this goal, our curriculum varies from child to child as it is structured to meet his/her individual and differentiated needs. Your child may report that s/he is doing something different than his/her classmates. This may be true based on what each child needs in order to progress satisfactorily. The Pre-School Lab supports inclusion of children with special needs and will make every effort to meet the needs of families with children with special needs.

**Yearbook**

Each teacher will compile numerous photographs of your child and his interactions with his/her peers and teachers during activities and field trips throughout the year. All of these educational experiences can be placed in a CD full of memories!

**Zero Tolerance**

The Pre-School Lab has zero tolerance for: mistreatment of children in any form; alcohol, drug, and smoking of any kind on the premises; weapons, guns, or dangerous supplies brought to the Pre-School Lab. All chemicals are locked in secure cabinets.