

2024-2025 Gilbert Elementary Preschool Program Handbook

Gilbert Preschool Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Gilbert Preschool is to create a community where the multiple needs of all children are fostered through a nurturing environment rich with engaging and developmentally appropriate materials and tasks, where children become life long learners.

Welcome To the Gilbert Preschool Program

Gilbert Elementary was awarded the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Grant in 2010. The program's goal is to provide a high quality preschool program meeting each child's needs, including children with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds. The preschool provides a rich learning environment that encourages children's natural curiosity and supports them to take risks that lead to new skill development. It is a setting where children feel safe, respected, and cared for. This is an opportunity for all four-year-old children to take part in planned, active learning experiences to build their readiness skills. This program also serves children on Individualized Education Plans (IEP) that are transitioning from Early Access Services into the public school system. The preschool program has been accredited by the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards. The Iowa Early Learning Standards are used to guide expectations for the children and instructional practices.

Philosophy and Goals

- Play is an important vehicle for learning in all areas of development.
- Teachers must use a wide range of teaching strategies, including both child-initiated learning and direct teaching.
- Social/emotional readiness is critical to children's success in school and in life and should therefore be the focus of preschool programs.
- A print-rich environment that allows children to practice literacy skills in real-life situations, combined with intentional teaching of key concepts is the foundation of literacy learning in preschool.
- A primary role of the early childhood teacher is to provide an appropriate learning environment and many firsthand experiences that invite children to investigate, represent, and share.
- When families are an integral part of a school program, children's self-esteem and achievement are enhanced.
- Children's development and learning can and should be assessed in the context of classroom activities.
- That assessment is the key to planning for the individual needs of children.
- Peer modeling, lively interaction, and conversation are essential parts of early childhood programs.
- School board members, school administrators, and the general public should be knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate practices for young children.

Enrollment

It is the policy of the Gilbert Community School not to discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, creed, sex, religion, marital status, ethnic background, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic background in its educational programs, activities, or employment policies as required by Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Section 216.9 of the Iowa Code. The policy of the district shall be to provide educational programs and opportunities for students as needed on the basis of individual needs, interests, abilities and potential.

It is also the policy of the district that the curriculum content and instructional materials utilized reflect the cultural and racial diversity present in the United States and variety of careers, roles, and life-styles open to women as well

as men in our society. One of the objectives of the total curriculum should foster respect and appreciation for the cultural diversity found in our country and an awareness of the rights, duties and responsibilities of each individual as a member of a pluralistic society. Inquiries and grievances regarding compliance with Title IX, Title VI, Section 504, or Section 216.9 should be directed to the district's Equity Coordinator: Vic Vanderpool, Director of HR and Special Programs,, Gilbert Community Schools; 103 Mathews Drive; Gilbert, Iowa 50105; 515-232-3738.

ELIGIBILITY

Children must be four years of age prior to September 15th of the current school year, excluding those on Individual Education Plans. Pre-registration will begin in the spring of the year. Registration materials are available from the elementary office. Registration will continue until all spaces are filled.

HOURS

Classes meet for three hours each day (8:05-11:05 or 12:15-3:15), on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays, the AM program runs from 8:05-10:35 and 12:10-2:40. Mondays and early dismissal time will be used for:

- Parent meetings
- State-required data entry and review of data
- Home visits
- Planning and collaboration time for teaching staff
- Collaboration with community agencies

CLASS SIZES

Each preschool class size is determined by a variety of factors as listed below. However, Gilbert does attempt to keep each preschool class approximately the same size and maintains an appropriate number of staff based on the class size.

- The maximum class size in each session is based on square footage of the current location.
- Class size may be reduced based on the number of students needing specialized instruction. Our center maintains a ratio of 1 adult to 10 children at all times. Additional staff may be provided based on the individual needs of children.
- Classroom student numbers will not exceed 20, and the number of children allowed is based on usable square footage.

INCLUSION

The preschool program includes all children, including those with disabilities and unique learning needs. Modifications are made in the environment and staffing patterns in order to include children with special needs. Staff are aware of the identified needs of individual children and are trained to follow through on specific intervention plans. It is our belief that inclusion in our program will enrich the experience for teachers, students, other children and their families. The preschool facilities meet the Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility requirements.

A CHILD'S DAY

Preschool staff:

- Program Administrator
 - The elementary principal is designated as the program administrator supervising the preschool program. The principal meets all qualifications described in the IQPPS standards.
- Teacher
 - A full-time teacher licensed by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners and holding an Early Childhood endorsement is assigned to the preschool classroom.
- Teacher Associate
 - A full time teacher assistant in the classroom carries out activities under the supervision of the teacher. The teacher assistant will have specialized training in early childhood education. All associates will meet the IQPPS standards.
- School Nurse
 - The preschool will have the assistance of the school nurse. The current nurse, Jenna Kester, is available full time, is a certified RN, and is recertified every three years. She maintains student health records by updating them quarterly, and attends to the health needs of the students while they are at school. She is available for parent consultation when necessary.
- Support Staff
 - Heartland Area Education Agency support staff provide resources and assistance to the teacher and classroom upon request to help all children be successful in the preschool setting. Such staff may include early childhood consultant, school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapist or others.

Daily Activities:

Arrival

As the children arrive at school each day, they are greeted by their teachers at the buses or from the adult dropping off the child. When we enter the classroom, the children are directed to their hooks, where they are to care for their outdoor clothing, backpacks, and deliver any notes/forms from home to their teacher(s). Children may need verbal or physical assistance to complete these tasks, but our goal is to foster independence. As students enter the room they will wash hands, "sign in," respond to a "Question of the Day," and select a book to read or work at tabletop activities as all classmates arrive.

Opening/Morning Meeting/Family Meeting

This is one of our large group opportunities for the day. We work on our names, calendar and weather concepts, songs, classroom jobs, graphing, sharing, discussion of daily question, daily skill, and explanation of daily activities. Students will have opportunities to move through music activities, ask and answer questions, and share ideas/personal experiences..

Small Groups

During small groups, children have the opportunity to learn and practice skills in a smaller adult to child ratio. This affords the adult the chance to easily differentiate teaching and observe learning for each child. The groups will be continually changing to meet the needs of all of our students. READING (rhyming, alphabetic concepts, initial sounds, segmenting, blending, vocabulary), WRITING (handwriting practice,, fine motor strengthening, inventive spelling), MATH (counting, numbers, sets, sorting, classifying), and SOCIAL (Second Step and Habits of Mind) will be presented during these groups. There may be times that the entire class is working on the same skill, but in smaller groups to allow for cooperative learning and more direct contact between children and adults.

Bathroom and Handwashing

We will have a scheduled time when we will encourage children to use the bathroom. However, they are free to use (or not use) the bathroom whenever they have the need. Again, the goal is independence and we gladly work to help children with these skills. All children will wash hands at the following times:

- Entering the classroom
- After using the toilet
- After sensory play
- Before and after a cooking activity
- After coughing in hands or blowing nose
- Before/after snack.

Snack

Snack time is an excellent language and social experience. Additionally, small tummies need frequent filling with something healthy to keep the engines going at their best level. Snack usually consists of a beverage (milk, 100% juice, or water) and a serving of a nutritious snack (fruit, vegetables, crackers, pretzels). We will also plan to do cooking activities throughout the school year. As often as possible, snacks and beverages are served family style. Adults will sit with students to monitor safety, encourage language, and model manners/social skills.

A nutritious snack, provided from the district food service department, will be served daily. Two food groups will be represented at each snack time as outlined in USDA guidelines. The preschool serves a wide variety of nutritional snacks, and encourages children to expand their tastes by at least trying a portion of the food offered. Milk is provided free of charge each day for the children. Clean, sanitary drinking water (city water source) is available to children throughout the day. Staff discards any foods with expired dates. Foods that are hotter than 110 degrees Fahrenheit are kept out of children's reach, and those requiring refrigeration will be kept cold until served. For each child with special health care needs, food allergies, or special nutrition needs, the child's health care provider should provide the program in individualized care plan prepared in consultation with family members and specialist involved in the child's care. Children with food allergies shall be protected from contact with the problem food. With family consent, the program posts information about the child's allergies in the food preparation area and in areas of the facility the child uses to serve as a visual reminder to all adults who interact with the child during the day. Program staff will keep a daily record documenting the type and quantity of food a child consumes when any child with a disability has special feeding needs and provide parents with that information.

High-risk foods, often involved in choking incidents, will not be served. For children younger than three years, these include hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas and hard pretzels; spoonfuls of peanut butter; or chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.

**The school district does not use foods or beverages as rewards for academic performance or good behavior, and will not withhold food or beverages as a punishment, nor will teaching staff ever threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline.*

**If your child has or develops any food allergies or aversions, please inform the teacher.*

Large Group

Each day, large group will have one of the focus areas below. This focus area will be different every day.

1. **Thematic Introduction/Discussion:** Children will have opportunities to predict based on questions and clues.
2. **Sharing:** On a rotating basis, children will have the chance to share a little bit more about themselves. (See page 40 for an example page).
3. **Cognitive and Language:** Receptive and expressive language, practice with memory, logical thinking sequencing, etc.
4. **Science:** Hands-on experiment/lesson will conclude the week to help kids learn to predict, practice, and problem solve.
5. **Math or Literacy:** Children will hear books read aloud, play games with math skills, and have opportunities to retell/act out stories heard in class.
6. **Social-Emotional:** Children will learn and practice different pro-social skills using the Preschool Second Step curriculum as well as other developmentally appropriate books, songs and games.

Free Play

Much of the learning that occurs in preschool is through child-directed play opportunities. During this time, multiple areas and materials are available for children to independently explore. A dramatic play area supplies props that go along with a certain theme. Children can pretend with friends and teachers. Possible themes might be a grocery store, hospital, house, or a garden. Other areas include creative exploration (art), writing center, book nook, block play, fine motor (manipulative), math, puzzles, science, games, and thematic exploration. Adults help by setting up the environment, facilitating peer interactions, assisting in problem solving, encouraging engagement in activities, and modeling rich language experiences.

Story and Songs

Research and best practice tells us that reading to kids produces many benefits to their academic, communicative, and overall well-being. During this time, a story will be read to the children using many strategies to help them become good readers themselves. We will also use music and movement activities to get our bodies moving, learn new concepts, and have fun.

Recess

We have daily opportunities for outdoor play as the weather permits and provided the weather air quality and environmental safety conditions do not pose a threat. This allows children the opportunity to develop their large muscle skills, get exercise, and be active. We use the Child Care Weather Watch guidelines produced by Healthy Child Care Iowa to determine if the Wind Chill Factor or Heat Index is safe for outdoor play.

In cases when we cannot go outside (due to weather conditions) children are given the opportunity to use indoor equipment for similar activities inside and are supervised at the same level as outdoor equipment. For example, tumbling mats may be offered for upper body activities or rolling across the mat.

In order to make sure that your child can play comfortably outside, it is important to dress him/her according to the weather. When it is cold outside s/he needs a warm coat, mittens or gloves, a hat, snow pants, and boots (labeled with your child's name). For the warmer days, dressing your child lightly is just as important. For those in-between days, dressing your child in layers is a practical idea. It is expected that all students will go outside unless there is a doctor's note indicating the reason why the child cannot go outside.

There are areas on the playground for children to be in the shade and still be active. We encourage you to bring a hat or other clothing for your child to wear as another protection from the sun. Sunscreen or sunblock with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher should be applied to your child's exposed skin (only with your written parental permission to do so). When the public health authorities recommend use, we will also use an insect repellent containing DEET (only with your written permission) no more than once a day to protect your child from insect bites. Program staff will complete the National Program for Playground Safety's Suggested General Maintenance Checklist on a weekly basis.

Closing and Dismissal

We will review our day and celebrate with cheers. You might see staff saying good-bye to our friends with one of the three "H's" (Handshake, High-Five, or Hug). Our goal is to have children be responsible for collecting their belongings from their cubbies, and placing them in their bags to go home. Again we will encourage children to complete dressing skills on their own. Children will be released only to a parent, an approved caregiver, or assisted to their school bus.

Water Activities

There is a water table in the classroom for children to engage in learning activities through play. During water play, children are involved in active experiences with science and math concepts. To ensure that no infectious diseases are spread, children with sores on their hands are not allowed to participate with others in the water table. Children are not allowed to drink the water during water play activities. When the activity period is complete, the water table is drained and refilled with fresh water before a new group of children comes to participate. Outdoor water play is limited to tubs and buckets or containers as well as the water table. We do not participate in swimming pool activities. Staff supervise all children by sight and sound in all areas with access to water in tubs, buckets, and water tables.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum is a framework for learning opportunities and experiences. It is a process by which learners obtain knowledge and understanding, while developing life skills. It is continually revised and evaluated to make learning fun and exciting. It is the policy of this district that the curriculum content and instructional materials utilized reflect the cultural and racial diversity present in the United States and the variety of careers, roles, and life-styles open to women as well as men in our society. One of the objectives of the total curriculum and teaching strategies is to reduce stereotyping and to eliminate bias on the basis of sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, and physical disability. The curriculum should foster respect and appreciation for the cultural diversity found in our country and an awareness of the rights, duties, and responsibilities of each individual as a member of a multicultural nonsexist society. The Creative Curriculum is a research-based curriculum that promotes a child's social-emotional development and learning in the core areas of literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies. The curriculum honors creativity and values the teacher's role as one of making the learning for each child relevant and exciting. It utilizes high-quality standards that are linked to state and national expectations. Family involvement is also a key component of the curriculum.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CLASSROOM ANIMALS AND PETS

If you, as a parent or legal guardian, want to bring your family pet to share with your child's classroom, you are welcome. Please make sure to call the classroom teacher at least 24 hours in advance of the anticipated visit to ensure the animal will not interfere with classroom routine. The preschool teacher ensures that the animal does not create an unsafe or unsanitary condition. The animal should appear to be in good health and have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animal is fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) and suitable for contact with children. The teacher will ensure staff and children practice good hygiene and hand washing when coming into contact with the animal and after coming into contact with the animal. Teaching staff will supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals.

*Any children allergic to the pet will not be exposed to the animal. Reptiles are not allowed because of the risk for salmonella.

OBJECTS FROM HOME

Because the preschool program provides ample toys and learning materials for your child, we ask that the child does not bring toys from home. If your child brings an "attachment" item from home, we ask that it is small enough to fit inside his/her backpack or cubby. Please do not allow children to bring gum, candy, money, or toy guns to school. The program cannot be responsible for lost or broken toys brought from home.

CLOTHING

Please be aware that during our school day activities, your child may interact with materials such as sand, water, paint, cooking items, etc. As a result, we recommend that you only send your child to school in clothes that can get messy. We make every effort to protect clothing from these materials. Also, your child will participate in physical activities inside and outside. Please send your child in safe and comfortable shoes. An extra set of season appropriate clothing is recommended. Please put your child's labeled clothes into a gallon-sized baggie that we will keep at school in the event that your child will need them. Finally, we ask that you make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather conditions as we will go outside each day the conditions allow.

WEAPONS

No student shall carry, have in his or her possession, store, keep, leave, place or put into the possession of another student any real weapon or a look-alike weapon on any school premises, in any school vehicle or any vehicle used by the school or for school purposes, in any school building or other buildings or premises used for school functions, whether or not any person is endangered by such actions. "Look-alike weapon" means any item that resembles or appears to be a weapon.

FIELD TRIPS

An important learning opportunity can take place in the form of a field trip that is relevant and reinforces what has been taught in the classroom. Gilbert Community school buses are used for these field trips. Parents will be informed of each field trip through a newsletter and calendars well in advance. In the past, these field trips have included Deal's Orchard, CyRide, Iowa State, and local parks. Adult family members may be asked to volunteer to go on these trips to provide increased supervision and adult/child ratios. Preschool staff will inform parents when the extra parental participation is needed. Each child will be assigned to an adult for every part of the trip. When parents are invited to accompany the preschool classes on field trips, we ask that additional siblings do not attend.

A first-aid kit, emergency contact information, and emergency transport authorization information for the children in the group will be taken on all trips. Children will be counted every 15 minutes while on a field trip. Children may only use a public restroom if they are accompanied by a staff member. Children will never be left alone in a vehicle or unsupervised by an adult.

TOILET LEARNING

Toilet learning is an important time in a child's development. For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the following procedures are in place:

1. Diapering will be done only in the designated diaper area, i.e., the bathroom in the nurse's office, changing table. Food handling will not be permitted in this diapering area.
2. Staff will follow all diapering guidelines set forth in the Iowa Department of Public Health:
 - Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.
 - Staff check children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or contain feces at least every two hours. Diapers are changed when wet or soiled.
 - Staff change children's diapers or soiled underwear in the designated changing areas and not elsewhere in the facility.
 - At all times, caregivers have a hand on the child if being changed on an elevated surface.
 - Surfaces used for changing and on which changing materials are placed are not used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects, and especially not for any object involved with food or feeding.
 - Containers that hold soiled diapers and diapering materials have a lid that opens and closes tightly using a hands-free device (e.g., a step can). Containers are kept closed and are inaccessible to children. The container will be clearly labeled to show its intended use.
 - Diapering and Gloving posters will be posted in the changing area showing procedures through the use of visuals and words. These procedures are used by the program administrator to evaluate teaching staff that change diapers.
3. Potty chairs will not be used due to the risk of spreading infectious diarrhea.
4. Families may be asked to provide an extra set of clothing for their child in case of an "accident" or messy play. Please clearly label the clothing with your child's name to reduce the possibility of mistakes.

VISITORS

We love to have people visit our classroom. Please inform the teacher that you plan to make a visit (due to the number of adults that can be in our room). **For the safety of all children and staff in the building, you are required to check into the office to receive a visitor's badge. Each visit, your information will be submitted through our Raptor visitor management software.** When you are visiting, please know that the teacher may not be able to visit with you as the day is full of activity and the children are the main responsibility. The teacher would be happy to arrange an alternative time to visit about any issue, question, or concern. Be aware that children's behaviors may alter slightly (or greatly) as a result of a new/different/additional adult joining the classroom.

Students from Iowa State/DMAAC in teacher preparation courses or Gilbert High School students may spend time in our classroom throughout the school year. They may observe, interact, assess, plan, and carry out instruction with students

in our class. America Reads, America Counts tutors may also work with individual and/or small groups of children on teacher directed learning skills. Visitors with a specific area of expertise may visit to expand curricular areas. Parent volunteers may also be regular members of our classroom.

BIRTHDAYS

We *love* to celebrate birthdays, as we are thrilled to celebrate that day the world received the gift of your child. If your child would like to bring a treat that day, please make arrangements with the teacher to allow for extra time at snack. If your child's birthday falls on a non-school day (weekend, breaks, summer), we can schedule it on another day. Invitations to parties outside of school that do not include the entire class will not be distributed at school.

CHILD GUIDANCE/DISCIPLINE

Teaching staff will equitably use positive guidance, redirection, and planning ahead to prevent problems. They will encourage appropriate behavior through the use of consistent clear rules, and involving children in problem solving to foster the child's own ability to become self disciplined. Where the child understands words, discipline will be explained to the child before and at the time of any disciplinary action. Teaching staff will encourage children to respect other people, to be fair, respect, property and learn to be responsible for their actions. Teaching staff will use discipline that is consistent, clear, and understandable to the child. They will help children learn to persist when frustrated, play cooperatively with other children, use language to communicate needs, and learn turn taking.

Challenging Behavior

The teaching staff in the preschool is highly trained, responsive, respectful, and purposeful. The teachers anticipate and take steps to prevent potential challenging behaviors. They evaluate and change their responses based on individual needs. When children exhibit challenging behaviors, teachers promote pro-social behavior by:

- interacting in a respectful manner with all children.
- modeling turn-taking and sharing/caring behaviors
- helping children negotiate their interactions with one another and with shared materials.
- engaging children in the care of their classroom and ensuring that each child has an opportunity to contribute to the group.
- encouraging children to listen to others and helping them to provide comfort when others are sad or distressed

Teaching staff will guide children to develop self-control and orderly conduct in relationship to peers and adults. Children will be taught social, communication, and emotional regulation skills. If a child displays persistent, serious, and challenging behavior, the teaching staff, parents, and AEA support staff will work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.

Aggressive physical behavior toward staff or children is unacceptable. To protect all of the children, teaching staff will intervene immediately when a child becomes physically aggressive in order to encourage more acceptable behavior.

Permissible Methods of Discipline

For acts of aggression and fighting (biting, scratching, hitting) staff will set appropriate expectations for children and guide them in solving problems. This positive guidance will be the usual technique for managing children with challenging behaviors rather than punishing them for having problems they have not yet learned to solve. In addition, staff may:

1. Separate the children involved
2. Immediately comfort the individual who was injured
3. Care for any injury suffered by the victim involved in the incident
4. Notify parents or legal guardians of children involved in the incident
5. Review the adequacy of the teaching staff supervision, appropriateness of program activities, and administrative corrective action if there is a recurrence

Prohibited Practices

The program does not, and will not, employ any of the following disciplinary procedures:

1. Harsh or abusive tone of voice with the children nor make threats or derogatory remarks.
2. Physical punishment, including spanking, hitting, shaking, or grabbing.
3. Any punishment that would humiliate, frighten, or subject a child to neglect.
4. Withhold nor threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline.

TRANSPORTATION

For the morning class, transportation is available to school via the regular Gilbert bus. Students who live or have childcare in the Gilbert School District may also access school transportation home at the end of the preschool session. If a child is not riding the bus, they must be picked up by a parent or approved adult at 11:05. For the afternoon class, students who live or have childcare in the Gilbert School District can ride a bus to school. Students not riding the bus to school should be dropped off by a parent or approved adult at 12:15. Arrangements for transportation should be made through the Gilbert Community Schools Transportation Department at **232-0042**.

Conduct Expectations

Parents or legal guardians may request transportation at enrollment, indicating the pickup (AM) or drop off (PM) address, the name of the responsible person at that address, and emergency contact information for all parties involved. Parents or legal guardians are asked to keep their information current by reporting changes to the preschool teacher or elementary school secretary. All information will be updated at least quarterly by teaching staff.

For children who have special needs for transportation, the faculty will use a plan based on a functional assessment of the child's needs related to transportation. Any accommodations indicated in the child's Individualized Educational Program will be implemented as described.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Drop-Off:

BUS RIDERS

Buses will arrive at the elementary at approximately 7:45 (not all buses will arrive at that time). There will be at least one adult waiting to receive the preschoolers as they exit the buses. The adult will bring the preschool children into the school at which time the preschool students will wait with classroom just outside of the preschool class. Students will wait with an adult until 8:05 when they will enter the classroom to begin the day.

NON-BUS RIDERS

Beginning at 7:45, students that do not ride the bus to school can still find the adult receiving preschool children on the sidewalk just outside the main door to the Elementary. If you are dropping off your child at school, you should enter the parking lot and use the driveway on the east side of that parking lot. If you are using the driveway, you should pull forward as far north as possible and have your child exit the vehicle on the right side. They will then use the sidewalk to get to the building. You do not need to exit your vehicle as there will be an adult to guide students into the building.

PLEASE WAIT UNTIL THE VEHICLES IN FRONT OF YOU HAVE PULLED AHEAD BEFORE YOU MOVE YOUR VEHICLE. DO NOT PULL AROUND VEHICLES. If you would rather help your child get out of your vehicle, please park in the lot and then walk your child to the entrance or to the preschool staff waiting outside. Parents/caregivers will *not* need to bring the student into the building unless the student is arriving at school *after* 8:05 AM. At this time, the parent/caregiver will need to check their child in at the office and bring them to the classroom.

AM Pick-Up:

Dismissal time is 11:05 AM for the morning class. Students will be in the classroom waiting to be picked up at that time. Parents/caregivers are asked to use the parent pick-up drive on the west side of the elementary school. We will have numbered cones for each car to park by. At dismissal, the students and staff will be waiting on the west side of the building. Once your car is parked by a cone, staff will assist your child to the car to load. Please do not exit the car. After, those vehicles are loaded and children are buckled they will exit the area, and the next group of vehicles will move ahead. If you are late for pick up time, you will need to park and enter the building to check your child out from

the office. For those students riding the bus home, the bus will load at 11:05. An estimated time will be given as to when to expect your child's arrival from school.

PM Drop Off:

The afternoon class will begin at 12:15 PM. We will begin receiving students at that time. Parents/caregivers are asked to use the drop-off lane on the west side of the building. The first car in the line will pull their vehicle up to the end of the lane to cone 1. That will be the FRONT of the zone. Other vehicles will be positioned behind at each of the numbered cones.. **Please do not allow your child out of the vehicle until you see a classroom teacher or associate.** Once parked, the child can exit their vehicle on the passenger side.. Please do not have your child get out of the vehicle without assistance or outside of the zone. It only takes a second for an accident to happen. Load and unload children only in the designated area. After, those vehicles are unloaded they will exit the area, and the next group of vehicles will move ahead. If you are late for drop off time (after 12:15), you will need to park and enter the building to check your child in at the office and bring them to the classroom.

PM Pick Up:

BUS RIDERS

Bus riders will go with an adult to their assigned bus. Preschool students will not go to the bus without an assigned adult. Bus riders will be dismissed first.

NON-BUS RIDERS

Students that do not ride the bus home from school will wait inside the classroom and then will be escorted outside (to the east side of the school) after the buses have been loaded. Students will exit the building through the east side classroom door with their assigned adult. They will wait with that adult until their caregiver (parents, child care, etc.) picks them up from the staff member. If a change needs to be made from a typical pick up person, please call the office (same day) or send an email to the preschool teacher (if known prior). If you are late for pick up (3:20 or later), you will need to park, and check your student out from the office.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to be in school for the full session and are expected to be punctual in their arrival and departure. Students are not expected to be absent any more than is necessary for health reasons or appointments. Irregular attendance interferes with the progress of your child and others as teachers find themselves taking class time to repeat information and make adjustments for those students who have been absent. Please call the elementary office (**232-3744**) with the reason for an absence no later than 8:00 a.m. For safety's sake, if a student is absent without notification, the school teaching staff will attempt to contact the family to verify the child's absence from school.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Gilbert is proud of the involvement of our parents and families. This school/family relationship is no different in preschool. We encourage families to become involved in their child's education by observing their children during the day when possible and meeting with staff. Family members are welcome to visit at any time during class sessions.

Teachers and administrators use a variety of formal and informal (including conversations) ways to become acquainted with and learn from families about their family structure and their preferred means of child-rearing practices and communication; and information about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds as they wish to share. Families are surveyed in enrollment paperwork and through other questionnaires during the year regarding their family, beliefs, and preferences. Home visits are conducted at the beginning of the school year (see page 11). Program staff communicates with families, on at least a weekly basis, regarding children's activities and developmental milestones, shared care-giving issues, and other information that affects the well-being of their children. Family teacher conferences are held in both the fall and spring semesters, as well as when either party requests. At least one family event is held during the year.

Although in-person daily contact cannot be replaced, preschool staff also rely on notes home, emails, phone calls, newsletters, and bulletin boards as alternative means to establish and maintain open, two-way communication.

Gilbert Preschool Program invites you to become involved in one or all of the following ways, and welcomes other ideas as well.

1. Support your child's daily transition to school by sharing information about your child's interests and abilities. Keeping the teacher informed of changes and events that might affect your child allows the teacher to be more responsive to your child's needs.
2. Attend family meetings.
3. Return all forms, questionnaires, and so on, promptly.
4. Attend Family/Teacher conferences in the Fall and Spring semesters.
5. Take time to read the weekly newsletter and emails.
6. Check your child's backpack each day.
7. Share some of your talents in your child's class through activities such as: reading or storytelling, cooking, art, preparing visuals, music, sewing, crafts, hobbies, your profession, or artifacts from trips you have taken.
8. Share any of your family's cultural traditions, celebrations, or customs.
9. Read all the material sent home with your child.
10. Help with special events. Helping takes many different forms such as preparation of materials at home, making telephone calls, preparing or posting flyers, recruiting other volunteers, collecting donations or prizes, running errands, photography, setup before the event, or clean afterwards.
11. Serve on the District Advisory Committee or PTO.

VOLUNTEERS

There are a variety of ways that you can volunteer your time and/or talents this school year. Currently, volunteers are needed as:

- Classroom Volunteer (regular volunteer each week, i.e. every Tuesday)
- Playdoh Maker (one each month)
- Field trip chaperones (as needed)
- Preparing class materials at home (as needed)
- Party planning and assistance (Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, End of the Year)

You will have an opportunity to sign up for these tasks on **SignUpGenius.com** at the beginning of the school year.. In addition, the classroom may have other volunteers such as America Reads/America Counts tutors or Youth and Shelter Services Mentors. These volunteers will have all gone through background checks prior to working with Gilbert Preschool students. All parents who volunteer in the preschool will complete the Volunteer Background check through our Raptor system.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

We realize that there are times when our families might need additional assistance for a variety of reasons. Below is a list of resources available to our families:

[Student Assistance Program](#): Provides 24/7 mental health counseling for students. Contact the building school counselor with any questions.

[Student Support Services](#): Provides assistance to district families for school supplies, shoes, clothing, personal products and organizes our holiday giving. Mel Woodin is the student support coordinator for the elementary school.

[Story County Resources](#): Contact information for rental, heating and food assistance, as well as housing services.

HOME VISITS

Home visits are made prior to the start of school and are required for your child to start in the program. This is an opportunity for the preschool teacher to get to know you, your child, and your family. This is also an opportunity to

begin creating a partnership between home and school in order to best meet your child's needs. It also allows your child to become familiar and comfortable with his/her teacher and have any questions you may have answered. This is a great time for you to share what makes your family unique, how you prefer to communicate with the teacher, and share your knowledge about your child's interests, approaches to learning, and developmental needs. You can help the teacher understand what your goals are for your child and whether you have any concerns you'd like addressed. Parents are encouraged to share these preferences, concerns, and questions at any time with either the classroom teacher or administrator.

FAMILY/TEACHER CONFERENCES

The preschool program will have formal family teacher conferences at the same time as the elementary school—fall and spring. The teacher will share a report card of your child's progress on the various skills. Conferences are also great times to share parents' concerns, goals, and feedback on their child's education. During the conference the teacher will share results of classroom assessments and samples of your child's work. Together you can make a plan to continue to encourage your child's growth and development.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Communication between the family and the teacher is essential to the care and education of each student. There are a variety of ways that this can be accomplished. Seesaw, email, phone calls, face to face, conferences, and notes can be used to share information between the two sources. Paper communication can be shared using your child's red folder that will go between home and school each day. The folder will be used to transport student work, informational flyers, and notes between the teacher and the family. It is a good idea to check the folder on a daily basis to make sure that items and important notes don't get missed. Parents are encouraged to maintain regular, on-going, two-way communication with the teaching staff in a manner that best meets their needs (Seesaw, email, in person, notes, or phone calls).

PRESCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The District Advisory Committee serves as the preschool advisory committee for the Gilbert Preschool Program and is composed of parents, school staff, and other community members. This group meets annually to provide feedback on services that meet children and family needs. They also serve as a sounding board for new ideas and services. Please let the preschool teacher know if you are interested in being part of the District Advisory Committee.

**At times, other ad hoc committees, such as local childcare providers, are formed to gather feedback.*

HEALTH AND SAFETY

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- All staff must be alert to the health of each child, known allergies, or special medical conditions.
- Under the supervision of the preschool teacher, all staff must be alert to the whereabouts of all children. Systems are in place for accounting for children at regular intervals, especially during periods of transition.
- All staff are to follow proper procedures for hand washing, using disinfectant, and following universal precautions to prevent infections.
- All staff are familiar with evacuation routes and procedures.
- All teaching staff complete "Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens" annually.
- At least one staff member who has a certificate of satisfactory completion of pediatric first-aid training, including managing a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing for infants and children, is always present with each group of children. When a child in the group has a special health condition that might require CPR, one staff person who has successfully completed training in CPR is present in the program at all times.

**A crisis plan manual is found in every classroom and in the elementary office. Emergency evacuation procedures (i.e. fire and tornado drill) are posted in the classroom.*

ILLNESS POLICY

For the health and safety of all the children, we ask that parents use their best discretion when determining if their child is too ill to be at school. If your child has any of the following symptoms during the night, he or she will not be admitted the following morning for the safety of the other children:

- Fever greater than 100 degrees F
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Pink eyes with drainage
- Cough with congestion and excessive nasal discharge
- Cold sores or lesions

If your child has seen a physician and been diagnosed with a communicable disease, please let us know so we can confidentially notify our school nurse and other families. Please use the guidelines below when determining when your child should return to school:

- Fever free for 24 hours (without fever reducing medicines)
- Chicken pox: one week after onset (or when lesions are crusted)
- Strep: 24 hours after initial medication
- Vomiting/Diarrhea: 24 hours after last episode
- Cold sores or lesions shows signs of healing (scabbed over)
- Conjunctivitis: 24 hours after initial medication or when without drainage

If a child becomes ill during their day at preschool, parents, legal guardians, or other person authorized by the parent will be notified immediately to pick up the child. For this reason, please be sure that we have current, accurate phone numbers for you, your authorized emergency contact person and your child's pediatrician. In the meantime, we will provide the child a place to rest until the parent, legal guardian or designated person arrives under the supervision of someone familiar with the child.

IMMUNIZATION/SAFETY RECORDS

Before a child begins the program, health records that document the dates of service shall be submitted that show the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the schedule recommended and published by the American Academy of Pediatrics. When a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents, legal guardians, or both provide evidence of an appointment for those services before the child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program, except for immunization for which parents are using religious exemption.

CLEANING AND SANITIZATION

The facility will be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. When a spill occurs, the area will be made inaccessible to children and the area will be cleaned immediately.

Toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion will be removed immediately and disinfected after they are cleaned with soap and water. This also applies to other surfaces in the classroom. Toys and surfaces will be disinfected using a non-toxic solution of one tablespoon household bleach to one quart of tap water made fresh daily. To disinfect, the surfaces will be sprayed until glossy. The bleach solution will be left on for at least two minutes before it is wiped off with a clean paper towel, or it may be allowed to air dry. Machine washable cloth toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion must be laundered before another child's use. Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used. Routine cleaning will be supervised by the preschool teacher and will follow the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table and a checklist will be maintained.

Facility cleaning requiring potentially hazardous chemicals will be scheduled when children are not present in order to minimize exposure of the children. All cleaning products will be used as directed by the manufacturer's label. Non-toxic substances will be used whenever

possible. Staff are trained yearly prior to the start of the school year. All custodial staff have been trained in using OSHA standards and follow those cleaning/sanitation guidelines.

MEDICATION

The school will administer medication to children with written approval of the parent and an order from a health provider for a specific child. Because administration of medication in the school is a safety hazard, medication administration will be limited to situations where an agreement to give medicine outside preschool hours cannot be

made. Whenever possible, the first dose of medication should be given at home to see if the child has any type of reaction.

Procedure

The school nurse coordinates and/or administers medication during school hours only if the parent or legal guardian has provided written consent and the medication is available in an original labeled prescription or manufacturer's container that is child-resistant. Any other person who would administer medication has specific training and a written performance evaluation, updated annually by a health professional on the practice of the five right practices of medication administration:

1. Verifying that the right child receives the
2. Right medication
3. In the right dose
4. At the right time
5. By the right method with documentation of each right each time the medication is given.

Instructions for the dose, time, method to be used, and duration of administration will be provided to the teaching staff in writing (by a signed note or a prescription label) or dictated over the telephone by a physician or other person legally authorized to prescribe medication. This requirement applies both to prescription and over-the-counter medications.

Medications will be kept at the temperature recommended for that type of medication, in a sturdy, child-resistant container that is locked and prevents spillage and will not be used beyond their expiration date. Instructions/prescriptions should be renewed at least annually. A medication administration log will be maintained.

HAND WASHING

Frequent hand washing is key to preventing the spread of infectious diseases. Teachers teach children how to wash their hands effectively. Visuals of proper hand washing are in the restrooms and near the sink in the classroom. The program follows these practices regarding hand washing:

- Staff members and children learn personal hygiene are taught hand-washing procedures and are periodically monitored.
- Hand washing is required by all staff, volunteers, and children when hand washing reduces the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others.
- Staff members assist children with hand washing as needed to successfully complete the task.

Children and adults wash their hands:

- Upon arrival for the day;
- After diapering or using the toilet (use of wet wipes is acceptable for infants);
- After handling body fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, or any touching of mucus, blood or vomit);
- Before meals and snacks, preparing or serving food, or handling any raw food That requires cooking (e.g., meat, eggs, poultry);
- After playing in water that is shared by two or more people; after handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals

Adults also wash their hands:

- Before and after feeding a child;
- Before and after administering medication;
- After assisting a child with toileting
- After handling garbage or cleaning.

**A separate sink is maintained for food preparation, handwashing, and cleaning.*

FIRST AID KIT

It is inaccessible to children, but readily available for adult use. It is fully equipped according to guidance from Healthy Child Care Iowa. Following each use of the First Aid kit, the contents will be inspected and missing or used items

replaced immediately. The First Aid kit will be inspected monthly. The first aid kit is taken to the outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from the site.

FIRE SAFETY

A fire extinguisher is installed in the preschool classroom with a tag indicating its annual service date. The fire alarm system is serviced annually. Smoke detectors, fire alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors are tested monthly. A written log of testing dates and battery changes is maintained and available upon request. Fire drills are conducted monthly and recorded on a log.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event that the Gilbert Community Schools must be closed due to bad weather, we will notify school patrons by email and local TV stations. It will also be posted on the school's website. If there is a two hour late start for the elementary, there will be no AM preschool. If there is an early release due to weather, there will be no PM preschool.

HAZARDS/ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Program staff protect children and adults from hazards, including electrical shock, burns, or scalding, slipping, tripping, or falling. Floor coverings are secured to keep staff and children from tripping or slipping.

The preschool classroom building has been tested for lead, radon, radiation, asbestos, fiberglass, and other hazards that could impact children's health with documentation on file. Custodial staff maintain the building's heating, cooling, and ventilation systems in compliance with national standards for facility use by children.

The program maintains facilities so they are free from harmful animals, insect pests, and poisonous plants. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents skin contact, inhalation, and other exposure to children. The program uses the techniques known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) so that the least hazardous means are used to control pests and unwanted vegetation.

SMOKE FREE FACILITY

In compliance with the Iowa Smokefree Air Act of 2008, Gilbert Community School buildings and grounds are smoke free. A "No Smoking" sign meeting the law's requirements is posted at the entrance to the elementary building to inform people that they are entering a non-smoking place. No smoking is allowed on the school grounds or within sight of any children.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES

The health and well-being of every child in our care is of the utmost importance and the protection of children is our responsibility. An applicant or volunteer for temporary or permanent employment with the preschool program involves direct interaction with or the opportunity to interact and associate with children must execute and submit an affidavit of clearance from any and all crimes against a child or families. In addition no person with a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect will come in contact with children in the program or have responsibility for children.

The program has written school board policy for reporting child abuse and neglect as well as procedures in place that comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws. The policy includes requirements for staff to report all suspected incidents of child abuse, neglect, or both by families, staff, volunteers, or others to the appropriate local agencies. Staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone unless it is proven that the report is malicious. All teaching staff complete "Mandatory Reporter: Child and Dependent Adult Abuse" at least every five years and within six months of employment.

The school district does not tolerate employees physically, or sexually abusing or harassing students. Students who are physically or sexually abused or harassed by an employee should notify their parents, legal guardians, teacher, principal, or another employee. The Iowa Department of Education has established a two-step procedure for investigating allegations of physical or sexual abuse of students by employees. That procedure requires the school district to designate an independent investigator to look into the allegations. The school district has designated the high school principal and director of school improvement at **515-232-3740**.

SCHOOL CONDUCT

SUPERVISION POLICY

Before children arrive at school, the preschool staff will complete the following daily safety checklist indoor and outdoor:

- All safety plugs and electric outlets covered, heat/AC, water temperature, and toilets in working order.
- All cleaning supplies/poisons out of children's reach and stored properly.
- Classroom and materials checked for cleanliness/broken parts, etc. including playground.
- Supplies checked (first aid kit, latex gloves, soap, paper towels).
- Daily monitoring of environment (spills, sand, etc.). Other serious problems reported to head custodian.
- Upon arrival, each child is observed by the teacher for signs of illness or injury that could affect the child's ability to participate in the daily activities.

No child will be left unsupervised while attending preschool. Staff will supervise primarily by sight. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible as long as teachers check every two to three minutes on children who are out of sight (e.g. those who can use the toilet independently, who are in the library area, etc.) Indoor and outdoor spaces will be zoned by teaching staff with special attention given to areas where injury could occur.

ETHICS/CONFIDENTIALITY

Staff follow an important code of ethics to guide their involvement with children and families. It is essential to protect the confidentiality of all information concerning children and their families. Maintaining a professional attitude includes being responsive to the needs of children and their families while balancing the need for confidentiality. Children are people who deserve respect. One way we demonstrate this respect is to refrain from talking about the children in their presence unless the child is part of the conversation and to refrain from labeling a child negatively or positively. No information regarding any particular child shall be shared with another child's parent. We continually strive to model such qualities as patience, tolerance, cooperation, acceptance, understanding of others, and enthusiasm for children as well as for other adults.

CHILDREN'S RECORDS

Student records containing personally identifiable information, except for directory information, are confidential. Only persons, including employees, who have a legitimate educational interest, are allowed to access a student's records without the parent's permission. Parents may access, request amendments to, and copy their child's records during regular office hours. Parents may also file a complaint with the United States Department of Education if they feel their rights regarding their child's records have been violated. For a complete copy of the school district's policy on student records or the procedure for filing a complaint, contact the board secretary in the district administration office.

ASSESSMENT

CHILD ASSESSMENT

It is the school district's belief that assessment of young children should be purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and take place in the natural setting by familiar adults. The results will be used for planning experiences for the children and to guide instruction. Assessment will never be used to label children or to include or exclude them from a program. A family's culture and a child's experiences outside the school setting are recognized as being an important piece of the child's growth and development. All results will be kept confidential, placed in each child's file, and stored in a secure filing cabinet.

A variety of assessment measures will be used to collect information about each child's development during their preschool year. The information is what helps the teaching staff plan for instruction with students to help each student grow in their development and acquisition of skills to prepare them for the next level in school. Assessment information will be shared formally with families during Parent Teacher Conferences in the fall and spring and informally as the need arises. The teachers will share information on a Preschool Conference Form with parents at that time. The preschool teacher will communicate weekly regarding children's activities and skills that will be introduced and practiced. Informal conferences are always welcome and can be requested at any time.

The following are the assessment measures that the preschool staff use with the students.

My Teaching Strategies (formally Teaching Strategies GOLD) online.

- Six developmental areas (Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Math)
- Data collected formally and informally
- Students' levels determined for all skills based on data, 2 times (Checkpoints) per year
- Parents will receive updated TSG information at conferences and the end of the year.

FAST

- Individual state reading assessment
- Areas include letter naming, letter sounds, onset sounds, and concepts of print
- Students assessed individually, 3 times per year
- Parents will receive letter with results following each assessment time

ESGI (Educational Software for Guiding Instruction)

- Individual online assessment of specific skills
 - Reading (ID Uppercase Letters, ID Lowercase Letters, Letter Sounds)
 - Math (Patterning, Object Counting, What Number Comes Next, Rote Counting, Number Recognition, Shapes, Colors)
 - Phonemic Awareness (Rhyming, Initial Sounds, Segment Blending) to assess reading skills three times per year.
- Parents will receive updates 3 times per year (conferences and end of the year).

Classroom observations, small group data, individual work samples are also used to determine each student's understanding and current performance of reading, math, cognitive, language, social, science, and motor skills.

If, through observation or information on the assessments given, the teacher feels that there is a possible issue related to a developmental delay or other special need, this will be communicated to the family during a conference, sharing documentation of the concern. Suggestions for next steps may include the following, with the knowledge and consent of the parents:

- The teacher requests assistance from the Area Education Agency (AEA) as an early intervention process. This team engages in problem identification, plans interventions, provide support, and make outside resources available to those individuals requesting assistance. The AEA team is available and functional for all students and teachers in the building.
- A request made to Heartland Area Education Agency for support and additional ideas or more formalized testing can be made.

The preschool teacher would assist in arranging for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment when indicated.

If a child is determined to need special accommodations, those accommodations are included in the materials, environment, and lesson plans for that child. The program provides families with information about programs and services from other organizations, such as Heartland AEA, DHS, Child Care Resource and Referral, Youth and Shelter Service programs, and medical professionals, etc.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The Gilbert Preschool Program implements the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards and Criteria. Administrators, families, staff, and other routinely participating adults will be involved annually in a program evaluation that measures progress toward the program's goals and objectives. The annual evaluation process includes gathering evidence on all areas of program functioning, including policies and procedures, program quality, children's progress and learning, family involvement and satisfaction, and community awareness and satisfaction. As part of our program assessment, in the fall and spring of each year, we also provide you with a family questionnaire to evaluate our program. This information helps us to assess how the program is meeting the needs of families and children, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses. A report of the annual evaluation findings is shared with families, staff, and appropriate advisory and governance boards. The program uses this information to plan professional development and program quality-improvement activities as well as to improve operations and policies.

