

Little Comets Preschool HANDBOOK



393 S. Lake Street
Amherst, Ohio 44001

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Amherst Preschool Staff

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Philosophy

All students are capable of learning when given a learning environment that is nurturing, educationally challenging and dedicated to promoting the social, emotional, and academic needs of the students. Our program encourages the family, school, and community to be a part of the learning process.

General Information

Little Comets Preschool is a preschool that serves children ages 3 through 5 years old. The preschool is located within Powers Elementary School.

The classrooms are designed to meet the needs of all children by providing a continuum of supports including general education classrooms, integrated classrooms, and self-contained classrooms. The program supports students with special needs, along with typically developing four and five year-old children. Opportunities for students with special needs and their typically developing peers is provided to the greatest extent possible. Each classroom will have a classroom aide to assist during all activities.

Classes are held Tuesday through Friday, AM and PM, for a minimum of 2 ½ hours each day. Mondays are currently used for conferences, assessment, inservice, and team meetings. Little Comets Preschool generally follows the Amherst Schools board adopted calendar.

Students are taught through a developmentally appropriate and multi-sensory curriculum aligned with the State of Ohio's pre-kindergarten content standards. A typical preschool day includes fine and gross motor activities, language arts, math, writing center activities, playtime, snack, circle time (calendar, weather, music, & stories) and small group activities for more individualized instruction.

The program is licensed and monitored by the Ohio Department of Education division of early childhood. Classroom teachers are required to have a valid teaching license in the state of Ohio. Teachers and related staff are required to participate in ongoing professional development on a yearly basis and have a medical exam every 3 years.

Eligibility for Special Education Services

The Amherst Schools provide preschool special education services to children ages 3 through 5 who experience a developmental delay or disability. When a disability is suspected, referral can be made to the Amherst school district for a multifaceted evaluation to be conducted by the preschool assessment team. This team usually consists of the school psychologist, preschool special education teacher, and speech therapist. Services are provided in the child's least restrictive preschool environment. Itinerant services are provided to students in the community no further than one mile outside the school district boundary.

Peer Models

Peer Models are children without delays or disabilities who are age 4 or 5 who are integrated and participate along with the special needs students in the preschool program. Peer Models will be exposed to cognitive, language, physical, and self-help development while developing peer relationships which are important for the social and cognitive development of every child. While benefiting from the preschool experience, these children provide peer interaction and social motivation for the preschoolers with special needs. All children learn, not only from adults, but from watching and interacting with other children. Peer Models must be 4 years old by August 1 for the year of participation. Participation as a peer is tuition-based. Transportation to and from school must be provided by the parent or guardian of a peer model. Peer Models must be toilet trained.

Emergency Cards

Ohio school law requires that an emergency card is completed in full and that all information is correct. It is vital that if at any time phone numbers, addresses, or names contained on the card change, the school is notified so the card can be updated. Emergency cards must be on file so if an emergency arises, the school can take proper action.

Licensing requires that all preschool children have a yearly medical exam. The preschool **medical form** needs to be completed **within 30 days of entry for a new special needs student on an IEP. Peer Models are required to have a medical form on the first day of school.** Please be aware that returning students need an updated medical form each year. Students will be excluded from the program without the completed forms within 30 days. (Forms are available in the preschool classrooms).

Arrival/Dismissal

AM Preschool:

- Arrival (8:50-9:00): Please either park in the main parking lot and walk your child to the preschool entrance or pull around the bus loop and wait in line until a preschool staff member releases your child from the car.
- Dismissal (11:35-11:45): Please park in the main parking lot and wait for your child outside the preschool entrance until they have been dismissed by their teacher.

PM Preschool:

- Arrival (12:35-12:45): Please either park in the main parking lot and walk your child to the preschool entrance or pull around the bus loop and wait in line until a preschool staff member releases your child from the car.
- Dismissal (3:05-3:15): Please park in the main parking lot and wait for your child outside the preschool entrance until they have been dismissed by their teacher.

***Please note- if your child is going home with someone different than who they normally go home with we ask that you send a note with your child to alert the teacher and have that adult bring their photo ID to show our staff.*

***Please do not enter the drive by the preschool entrance for the safety of our preschool students, staff and families.*

Parent/Teacher Communication

At the Preschool Parent Orientation, parents will receive a communication folder. The folder needs to be transported from school to home on a daily basis. Important notes/papers will be put in the folder for parents to view or respond to. Teachers ask that parents use this folder to transport important notes to school as well. Email is a great way to communicate with your child's teacher. To access teacher email, visit the Amherst school district website, then click on Little Comets Preschool, and click on the link for teachers to locate your child's teacher. Monthly newsletters will be sent home in the communication folder that will discuss important dates, school vacations, early release or late arrival days, conference information, and preschool activities.

In addition, the preschool will provide parents with a Student Roster Disclosure. At the beginning of the school year parents will have the opportunity to share personal information such as parents' names and phone numbers to be included in a class roster that would be available for any preschool parent upon request. This is voluntary and information is only included with parent permission.

Little Comets Preschool always welcomes parent participation in the classroom. Parents are encouraged to contact classroom teachers at any time throughout the school year.

Preschool Supplies

Send a **backpack** with your child every day. Please make sure the backpack is standard size with no wheels and labeled with your child's name. The backpack will help your child carry the communication folder, school projects, and an **extra set of clothes**. The extra set of clothing (shirt, pants, socks, and undergarment) should be in a plastic ziploc bag labeled with your child's name. The bag of clothing should remain in your child's backpack throughout the year.

A pack of diapers/pull-ups and a container of wet wipes may be needed for special education preschoolers. Peer Models are required to be toilet trained.

Supply List

* Please do not label supplies

- 1 8 oz. bottle of Elmer's glue
- 1 24 count Crayola crayons (skinny)
- 4 dry erase markers
- 1 8 count washable Crayola markers
- 16 Elmer's glue sticks (purple if possible)
- 1 box of kleenex/tissues
- 1 4-pack of 5 oz. Play-Doh
- 1 box of Ziploc gallon bags
- 2 containers of Clorox wipes
- 1 Bookbag (large enough to hold large folder and please no wheels)
- 1 Lunch box or bag (labeled with student name)

Preschool Birthdays and Holiday Parties

Due to the health regulations and the increased number of food allergies, we are no longer accepting birthday treats at school. Please do not send in any treats or party bags. Snacks for the three major holidays will be coordinated by the classroom teacher so that ingredients can be verified.

Preschool Snack

State guidelines require that students be given a snack during their preschool day. We emphasize the importance of nutrition, therefore the following snacks are suggested: pretzels, graham crackers, orange fish crackers, yogurt, pudding, applesauce, saltines/cheese, fresh fruit or vegetables. Please visit www.myplate.gov for additional nutrition literature and resources. **Your child will be responsible for providing their own snack and drink each day.**

Dress Guidelines

We finger paint, easel paint, glue, cook, and actively discover and learn. Children feel comfortable if they are wearing play clothes. Please remember, accidents happen and it is best if clothing is washable. Dress your child for playing both indoors and outdoors. **Please label your child's coats, jackets, hats, mittens, and backpack with his/her name.**

Bus Transportation

Bus transportation is provided to some children receiving special education services. If you wish to speak to the transportation staff regarding questions or concerns, please call 988-2633. Bus drivers will call parents with approximate pick-up & drop-off times prior to the first day of school.

Field Trips

Little Comets Preschool may plan parent-involvement field trips within the community setting throughout the year. If so, the field trip scheduled will take the place of the regular school day. Transportation will be provided by the parents/guardians and parents/guardians will be required to stay and chaperone their child throughout the event.

Illness and Medication

The school clinic aide is employed by the Amherst Schools. The clinic aides are supervised and plan in conjunction with the Lorain County Board of Health. In case of injuries such as cuts, scrapes, etc., the school gives first aid; we contact the parent immediately if medical attention is required. Any time a student has a head injury, the family will be contacted using the emergency contact information provided by the parents. In the event a parent cannot be reached, we will call the additional numbers that are listed on the emergency card. We will call 911 for medical assistance in the event of a serious injury or medical crisis.

For students who must take medication at school, please contact the school office to obtain medical forms that need to be completed by the student's physician. All medications will be kept in a locked cabinet located in the clinic. The clinic aides are responsible for maintaining logs of all medications, health care plans, and student visits (due to illness or injury).

Communicable Diseases

If your child's absence is due to a communicable disease such as head lice, strep throat, chickenpox, COVID-19, etc., please inform the teacher or attendance office immediately. If your child is exposed to a communicable disease at school, you will be notified.

A child demonstrating any of the following signs or symptoms of illness will be immediately isolated, the parent/guardian contacted, and then sent home:

- Diarrhea
- Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Conjunctivitis
- Temperature of one hundred (100) degrees Fahrenheit (as taken by the auxiliary method when in combination with other signs of illness)
- Untreated infected skin patch(es)
- Unusually dark urine and/or grey or white stool
- Stiff neck
- Evidence of lice, scabies, or other parasitic infections

A child with any of the following signs or symptoms of illness is immediately isolated from the other children and decisions regarding whether the child should be sent home immediately or at some other time of the day shall be determined by the Preschool Coordinator and the parent/guardian.

The child, while isolated, shall be carefully watched for the symptoms listed above, as well as the following:

- Unusual spots or rashes
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Elevated temperature
- Vomiting

If a child needs to be isolated from the other students, due to demonstrating any of the symptoms listed above, that child will **at all times** be cared for in the main office, within sight or hearing of an adult at all times, be made comfortable and provided with a cot, and observed carefully.

All efforts will be made to contact a parent/guardian and the child will be discharged to an individual listed on the child's emergency medical form.

Our preschool staff are trained annually on the symptoms, transmission and notification processes involved in the care of a child who presents with any of the symptoms listed above.

If your child has been absent due to illness, they may return to school when they remain fever-free without fever-reducing medication.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent, please call your child's preschool teacher to report the absence at school. If your special needs child is transported by bus, also please call 988-2633 to inform the bus garage.

If your child has been absent due to illness, they may return to school when they remain fever-free without fever-reducing medication.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Conference days are established in October and February. At other times, parents must contact the teacher to schedule an appointment for a conference.

Preschool Report Cards

Report cards are designed for all students in the program. Areas on the report card include: social skills, language skills, self-help skills, language arts, math, and motor skills. Student progress will be discussed with parents during conferences, report cards will be sent home in December and again at the end of the year.

Preschool IEPs and Progress Reports

Preschool students who qualify for special education services have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Each plan is unique and is designed to meet their individual education goals. IEPs are confidential and they will not be discussed with anyone outside of their IEP team. Progress reports will go home quarterly to review with parents how their child is doing on their individual education goals.

Preschool Testing

The state of Ohio requires some testing of our preschoolers including Early Learning Assessment, Ages & Stages Questionnaire (social-emotional) and Early Childhood Outcomes (ratings of developmental areas). Your child will have at least two of these assessments or all three, depending on whether your child has special needs or is a typical peer model.

Developmental Screening and Referral Process

Peer Models: Within 60 days of starting school, observations and a developmental screen will be conducted with your child using the Brigance PreK Screen and/or ASQ-3. Results will be shared with parents at fall conferences, or sooner if referral for follow-up assessment is warranted.

(Students with Special Needs: If an initial evaluation for an IEP was completed within the first 60 days of school, screening was conducted as part of that process. Screening will be conducted annually thereafter).

Annual Health Screening and Referral Process

As part of your child's enrollment, you are required to have your child's physician complete a medical statement that ensures your child has had an annual physical exam (which may include height, weight, blood lead and hemoglobin levels), has up-to-date immunizations (or exemption), and is in suitable health to attend school. In addition, the Clinic Aides, supervised by our county Nursing Supervisor will screen your child's hearing and vision within 60 days of enrollment, and annually thereafter. Results will be maintained in the nurse's office and in the child's cumulative folder. The nurse will notify the teacher and send a referral letter home if additional follow-up is recommended.

Transition Information

Into Preschool:

Special needs: Parents and students have the opportunity to tour the classrooms when they have their Play-based assessment. Information from families is summarized in the ETR and Child and Family Information Form upon enrollment. When their IEP is complete and their classroom is assigned, parents and students can visit the classroom. The teacher will provide parent orientation regarding procedures and the handbook.

Typical Peers: Parents and children have an opportunity to attend an Open House or arrange a personal tour prior to turning in their application and deposit. A letter is sent following their child's registration with a reminder about upcoming dates in August including when class lists are posted, a building Open House for families to see the classroom and meet the teacher, Parent Orientation, and the first day of school. Parents may be present during arrival on the first day for taking pictures. Additionally parents will be asked to complete a Child and Family Information form at Parent Orientation.

Within the preschool:

If a student will be transitioning from a small class to a larger class, this will be discussed with the parent and the student will be provided opportunities to visit and be integrated for short periods in which they will likely be successful (free play and/or circle time). Teachers will collaborate regarding student information. Parents will have an opportunity to meet the transition teacher. Student file will be transferred at the end of the year (or designated time of transfer). Parents will attend the Parent Orientation with the new teacher in the fall.

To Kindergarten:

*During fall conferences teachers and parents will complete a Transition Planning Form for students who will go to kindergarten the following year.

*Teachers begin to talk with students in spring regarding the upcoming transition.

*Students participate in Kindergarten Transition Days in early May. Students visit a kindergarten classroom and participate in transition activities. If additional days are needed to help a student with the transition those days are set up on an as needed basis.

*Families are welcome to set up a tour on an individual basis with the preschool coordinator. Families will also get the opportunity to visit during Open House in the fall.

*If students with special needs were previously identified as developmentally delayed, a re-evaluation is completed and a new IEP is developed as needed. A kindergarten teacher or intervention specialist will be invited to attend the transition IEP conference.

*Parents will complete the returning student registration over the summer.

*Parents are invited to a preschool graduation celebration on the last day of preschool.

*Final report cards are shared with parents.

*Preschool teachers are present for the two kindergarten orientation days to greet students and help with adjustment.

Withdrawal to Another Preschool: Parents should notify the child's teacher of the withdrawal, and come to the school office to sign and date a Withdrawal Form and Records Release Form, which includes the name and address of the new school. The preschool teacher (and if needed the special education secretary) will forward records.

Records Transfer Policy: Upon withdrawal and release of records, the preschool teacher and/or preschool administrator will forward copies of report cards, assessments such as ELA scores, Early Childhood Outcomes Summary Form and Ages & Stages scores to the receiving school. (ETR and IEP will also be forwarded, if applicable).

Community Resources

Little Comets Preschool would like to support the families of our students. If you need any support, please contact your child's teacher or the preschool coordinator for additional information whether it is for your child or another family member. Your request will be handled in a confidential manner. In addition, some local resources are listed below:

Children's Developmental Center (OT, PT, Speech, Summer Camps	440-984-2496
Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio (food needs)	440-960-2265
Lorain County Health Department	440-322-6367
Lorain County Health and Dentistry	440-240-1655
Amherst Public Library	440-988-4230
Educational Service Center of Lorain County Region 2 SST	440-324-5777
Mercy Recreational and Health Center	440-984-3470
Firelands Counseling	440-984-3882
Beechbrook	440-324-4980
Guidestone	866-557-5218
Bellfaire	440-324-5701
Far West Center	440-988-4900
Allied Behavioral Health Services	440-282-1383

Healthchek Services for Children Younger than Age 21

Healthchek is Ohio's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Program. It is a service package for babies, kids, and young adults younger than age 21 who are enrolled on Ohio Medicaid. The purpose of Healthchek is to discover and treat health problems early. If a potential health problem is found, further diagnosis and treatment are covered by Medicaid.

Healthchek covers ten check-ups in the first two years of life and annual check-ups thereafter and offers a comprehensive physical examination that includes:

- medical history
- complete unclothed exam (with parent approval)
- developmental screening (to assess if child's physical and mental abilities are age appropriate)
- vision screening
- dental screening
- hearing assessment

- immunization assessment (making sure child receives them on time)
- lead screening; and
- other services or screenings as needed

If your children are enrolled on Ohio Medicaid, Healthchek services are available to them. If you are younger than age 21 and are also enrolled, you can receive Healthchek services, too.

You can get help and information by contacting your county Healthchek coordinator or your managed care plan and by going to <http://medicaid.ohio.gov/FOROHIOANS/Programs/Healthchek.aspx>

Discipline

The preschool staff works to help our students become gradually more independent, self-reliant, confident, and responsible for their behaviors. Teachers use a variety of techniques to teach behaviors. They may use modeling of appropriate behavior, positive reinforcement, natural and logical consequences, redirection, and “time out”. Teachers encourage children to express their feelings in an acceptable way. If behaviors interfere with learning and productive activities and/or safety of others, the teachers will inform parents and a plan will be developed to address behavior concerns. Behavioral expectations for students are posted in each classroom.

Little Comets philosophy on discipline applies to all students on the premises and shall be restricted as follows:

- There shall be no cruel, harsh, corporal punishment or any unusual punishments such as, but not limited to, punching, pinching, shaking, spanking or biting.
- No discipline shall be delegated to any other child.
- No physical restraints shall be used to confine a child by any means other than holding a child for a short period of time, such as a protective hug, so the child may regain control.
- No child shall be placed in a locked room or confined in an enclosed area such as a closet, box or similar cubical.
- No child shall be subjected to profane language, threats or derogatory remarks about himself or his family or other verbal abuse.
- Discipline shall not be imposed upon a child for failure to eat, failure to sleep or for toileting accidents.
- Techniques of discipline shall not humiliate, shame or frighten a child.
- Discipline shall not include withholding food, rest, or toilet use.
- Separation, when used as discipline, shall be brief in duration and appropriate to the child’s age and developmental ability (the child shall be within sight and hearing of a preschool staff member in a safe, lighted, and well-ventilated space).
- The center shall not abuse or neglect children and shall protect children from abuse and neglect while in attendance in the preschool program.

Annual Survey

In order to strengthen the quality of the preschool program, annually in May, parents and community stakeholders are asked to complete a survey regarding their experience with Little Comets Preschool which contains items related to programming, curriculum and materials, staff communication and responsiveness, facility, tuition and transition to kindergarten. Surveys are collected and reviewed by the preschool teachers, coordinator, and special education director for reflection and refinement of the program for the following year. The district is exploring the potential for a paperless survey on our website to elicit ongoing feedback.

Questions or Concerns

Parents/guardians should contact Corrie Roark (Corrie_Roark@amherstk12.org and 988-1494) or Sarah Walker (sarah_walker@amherstk12.org and 988-1990) with any questions regarding the Little Comets Preschool program or the handbook.

Additional questions or concerns (or to obtain a Little Comets Preschool licensing report), please contact the Office for Early Learning and School Readiness at the Ohio Department of Education.

25 Front St.
Columbus, OH 43215-4183
877-644-6338

Parents:

In order to provide evidence that we have provided you with a copy of the Amherst Little Comets Preschool Handbook and mandated information, please sign, date, and return this page to your child’s teacher.

Child’s Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

LCP has my permission to include my information in the Little Comets Preschool Directory for the current school year.

Yes _____ **NO** _____ **(Please initial)** _____

Date: _____