



# Ambrose Family Center Preschool Family Handbook

222 W. Cedar Avenue  
Webster Groves, MO 63119  
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<https://www.webster.k12.mo.us/ambrose>



## PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

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*The Preschool Director may add, change, delete, or discontinue parts of the handbook, at any time, without notice. The most current handbook can be found on the AFC Preschool website:*

<http://www.webster.k12.mo.us/ambrose/preschoolhandbook>

## WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Families,

This **Family Handbook** is designed to provide you with important information about our program, practices, and procedures. We ask that you read this Family Handbook thoroughly as it should answer most of the questions you may have about our preschool programming. However, if you have additional questions that are not addressed in the Family Handbook, or if you need additional clarification about the information provided, please do not hesitate to let us know.

At the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**, we view what we create together as a “museum of childhood”, and we see our building as a teacher. Childhood is treasured. Our greatest contribution as parents and educators is to raise children who have a wonder for life and a love for learning. We are committed to providing a caring, enriching, and safe environment for your child. We look forward to the many joyous experiences we will share together.

Nothing without joy . . .

The Ambrose Family Center’s Preschool Staff



## **AMBROSE FAMILY CENTER PROGRAMS**

### **History**

Known for over 50 years as Bristol Primary, the **Ambrose Family Center** was renamed in June 2011, to reflect the early years education and family programs offered in the Webster Groves School District. Mr. Walter Ambrose served on the Board of Education for the Webster Groves School District for three terms, including one as President of the Board, and was an early supporter of children and family services. His dedication to education, families, and the betterment of the District and community continues on in the work of the **Ambrose Family Center** programs.

### **Services**

The **Ambrose Family Center** offers an award-winning preschool experience, parenting support services (PAT), and elementary age before and after school care (Adventure Club). The provision of a seamless continuum of services for families in the Webster Groves School District offers to families a comprehensive model for early learning programming that considers a family's wide-ranging needs.

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is Missouri accredited, licensed by the state of Missouri - Bureau of Child Care Safety and Licensure, and was honored by the Missouri School Board Association as an award-winning early childhood program.

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** has a mutually respectful and long standing partnership with Special School District in order to fully support the special education rights of all children. The preschool embraces inclusive education and is committed to fostering community and belonging by having children with a wide range of unique abilities represented in each classroom. A collaborative partnership with Head Start and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provides quality preschool opportunities for families who qualify. Our programs continuously strive to create a welcoming and inclusive environment (opportunities) for all families who seek to enroll in our programming regardless of income, race, education, family structure, nationality, or abilities.

## BELIEFS AND COMMITMENTS

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All **Ambrose Family Center** programs and staff are committed to seeing in each child their rich potential. As they learn, children transform themselves, their knowledge, and their understanding of the world. Our purpose is to inspire children to transform their world each day and into their future.

### Vision

## *Children Transforming Their World*

### Mission



We encourage our families, staff, and the community to find themselves in the words and the work of our mission.

### Beliefs and Commitments

- Children first.
- Children are curious and playful by nature.
- Children's understanding cannot be hurried.
- Children guide our learning.
- Children show and share their understanding in many ways.
- Children need deep human connections.

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** supports the Webster Groves School District's purpose and principles:

## Our Purpose

Inspiring students' lives and communities through learning.

## Our Principles

We **ensure** academic excellence and continuous growth.

We **promote** a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment.

We **nurture** trusting and supportive relationships.

We **hear** and **value** diverse voices and multiple perspectives.

We **prioritize** personal well-being and the well-being of others.

We **empower** lifelong learners to embrace challenges and explore creative solutions.

## PRESCHOOL STAFF

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The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is guided and inspired by the collaboration of our dedicated staff. We are committed to our vision and work each day to live out our beliefs that put children first.

Our staff is prepared with years of study and professional experience. Our teachers have appropriate degrees and certifications and are trained in the Project Construct curriculum, and deeply study principles of the Reggio Emilia approach. Professional growth and learning is a priority for all staff in order to maintain the high standards of the Webster Groves School District and current best practices in the field of early childhood education. Staff members are also First Aid and CPR certified as well as registered with the Family Care Safety Registry.

We further our professional commitments to the field of early learning by being affiliated with many professional organizations that support early childhood education. These organizations include National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); and NAREA (North American Reggio Emilia Alliance), and the NEA (National Education Association).

The **Ambrose Family Center** staff supports the work of our community and are advocates for public awareness related to early care and education. Our staff stay current of policy changes at the state, local, and national level that affect services and resources available for children and families. Nothing matters more in our work with children than meaningful relationships that enhance the quality of life of children, families, and the community at large.

## Contact Information

Bookkeeper:	Heather Gatermann	<a href="mailto:gatermann.heather@wgmail.org">gatermann.heather@wgmail.org</a>
Director:	Amanda Reading	<a href="mailto:reading.amanda@wgmail.org">reading.amanda@wgmail.org</a>
Educational Leadership Intern:	Julia Dietl	<a href="mailto:dietl.julia@wgmail.org">dietl.julia@wgmail.org</a>
Nurse:	Sarah Biffar	<a href="mailto:biffar.sarah@wgmail.org">biffar.sarah@wgmail.org</a>
Parents as Teachers Coordinator:	Chris Steger	<a href="mailto:steger.chris@wgmail.org">steger.chris@wgmail.org</a>
Registrar:	Tina Fichter	<a href="mailto:fichter.christine@wgmail.org">fichter.christine@wgmail.org</a>
Registrar:	TBD	
Social Worker:	Angie Spatola	<a href="mailto:spatola.angie@wgmail.org">spatola.angie@wgmail.org</a>

## Webster Groves School District Affiliation

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is a part of Webster Groves School District. The Director of the Ambrose Family Center attends District meetings regularly. The School Board and the District Superintendent play an active role in the Ambrose Family Center programs. Board liaisons are assigned to each school in the District as a point of contact for families. The liaisons for the Ambrose Family Center are:

Alexander Kahn  
[kahn.alexander@wgmail.org](mailto:kahn.alexander@wgmail.org)

Allen Todd  
[todd.allen@wgmail.org](mailto:todd.allen@wgmail.org)

Webster Groves School District Board of Education members are: Jo Doll (Board President), Christine Keller (Vice-President), Allen Todd (Secretary), Alexander Kahn, Kita Quinn,, Tara Scheer, and Dr. Grace Lee.

The Webster Groves School District's policy manual is available at: <https://www.mosba.org/>



## PROGRAM PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

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### Access to Information

All families are able to access the following information:

- **Missouri Accreditation:** The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** has achieved the rigorous process of Missouri accreditation. A copy of our current accreditation certificate is on display in the center's main office.
- **Missouri Licensing Rules:** The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is licensed by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. A copy of the licensing guidelines is kept in the main office. You may contact the Bureau of Child Care Safety and Licensure to review our records at any time. Their location is 220 South Jefferson, St. Louis, MO 63103.
- **Children's Records:** Pertinent information is kept in each child's file in the office. You may request copies at any time. In addition, digital portfolios of current progress are kept on each child (see "Assessments").
- All of the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** staff is registered with the Family Care Safety Registry. This information is updated annually. In addition, all staff go through criminal background checks which include fingerprinting that are updated every 5 years.

### Arrival Times / Departure Times

- **Full Day Program (including Two Year Old Classrooms):** Full Day class is in session from 8:15 AM - 3:15 PM. Because we offer extended hours from 7:30 - 8:15 AM in the morning and from 3:15 - 5:30 PM in the afternoon, all parents/guardians will be asked to put in writing their expected drop-off and pick-up times on the form provided in their registration packet. We use this information in scheduling staff and ordering meals in support of quality programming. Please note that while the center is open from 7:30 AM – 5:30 PM, these hours are meant to offer a range of time to fit the varying needs of busy families.
- **Half Day Program:** Half Day morning classes are held from 8:15 AM – 11: 15 AM. Half Day afternoon classes are held from 12:15 PM – 3:15 PM. Children should not be arriving any earlier than program start times or later than program end times. There is no early drop off or late pick up care for the Half Day program.

All parents/guardians or authorized individuals (must be at least 14 years old) must provide a photo I.D. and sign their child in and out each day with time and signature via the Brightwheel app. This is one way to safeguard your child by knowing when they are here and who has picked them up. Due to licensing regulations, no child can be unattended at any time. Please make sure all children, regardless of age, are with you at all times. Additionally, shared learning spaces (Collaboratory, ateliers, gym, playscape, etc.) require supervision of staff and therefore are not open to families (see "Dismissal Procedures").

## Attendance

Children are expected to be in school every day they are scheduled to attend. It is essential that all children be in their classrooms at the start of the learning day (8:15 AM or 12:15 PM) in order to become an integral part of their group. There are two reasons for this. First, we know children do best when following a predictable routine and children can become unsettled if they arrive late and have missed out on learning experiences. Secondly, we need to keep accurate attendance records for our meal counts and for funding source purposes. Please send a message in Brightwheel by 8:15 AM if your child will not be in attendance that day or if they will be late.

## Billing and Tuition Information

Tuition is based on a program year, August through May (totaling 9 total payments and an August deposit). Tuition will be due on the first of the month. You will receive an invoice and payment will be accepted through Brightwheel. Please contact our bookkeeper, Heather Gatermann, if an individual payment plan is needed.

**Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is a self-supporting program and depends upon prompt payments to meet expenses. Tuition is due in advance of services on the first day of the month.

- Tuition payments received after the 5th day of the month are considered late and will incur a \$25 late fee.
- Payments not received by the 20th will result in immediate withdrawal. Re-enrollment will be determined by space availability and is not guaranteed. Re-enrollment will require a \$50.00 re-enrollment fee.
- There are no refunds or modifications in tuition when children are sick, quarantined, on vacation, or if school is closed due to inclement weather or other emergencies.
- Enrollment and attendance in the AFC Preschool and Adventure Club will be unavailable until all accounts are paid in full.

Returned checks and online payments will be charged a \$35.00 returned payment fee, and an additional late payment fee of \$25.00 will be charged to your account when a NSF notice is received from the bank.

Two weeks written notice to the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** office regarding withdrawal or schedule change for your child is required. Tuition is charged through the month of transfer or withdrawal.

A summer program is offered to Full Day families currently enrolled. Summer tuition is charged separately. Payment may be made in one lump sum at the beginning of the summer session due on the first day of June.

If a child is returning the following school year, a non-refundable deposit is required and will be applied as August tuition. This procedure is in place to guarantee your child's space in the preschool and to assure predictable enrollments for the fall.

If paying by check, please make checks payable to *Ambrose Family Center*. Cash or money orders are also accepted. On the memo line of the check, be sure to include your child(ren)'s name(s).

Checks can be mailed to:

**Ambrose Family Center** – Attn: Billing  
222 W. Cedar Avenue  
Webster Groves, Missouri 63119

Or:

Checks may be placed in the mail slot just to the right of the front doors on Cedar Ave. Teachers will not accept payments.

Cash payments are discouraged but will be accepted if an emergency arises. Cash payments must be made in the office. Do not place cash in the mail slot.

Billing information will only be released to the person responsible for payments, as listed on the child's application, unless the person responsible for payment gives a written authorization to release this information.

## **Calendar**

Each family may access the center's calendar and subscribe to the calendar at [webster.k12.mo.us/ambrose/calendar](http://webster.k12.mo.us/ambrose/calendar). This calendar indicates days the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is not in session or is closing early. Our calendar is similar to that of the Webster Groves School District's elementary schools. These non-attendance days provide necessary time for our staff and building personnel to improve our programming, maintain our facilities, and allow staff time with their families. We recognize that this can pose a hardship for some of our families. Families are encouraged to network with one another to share childcare arrangements.

Information on upcoming events for **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is also shared with families via email, brightwheel, classroom blogs, on our webpage, and via social media feeds (see the "Connect with Us" section for more information).

## **Cell Phone Usage**

“Hang up and Hug Your Child”. The times you spend at the preschool dropping off and picking up your child are important times of communication between the school and home and most importantly, your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, and to meet your child’s needs during these times of transition, we ask that you refrain from using your cell phone at any time while inside the preschool or on the grounds. So please, “Hang up and hug!”

## **Changes in Information**

In the event of an emergency, we need to be able to contact you at any time and in a moment’s notice. In order to have accurate records, we keep each child’s permanent file updated. In addition to updating your Brightwheel account, please provide in writing to the Ambrose Family Center office any changes in personal data (i.e. address, phone numbers, marital status, authorized /emergency persons, etc.) Parents/guardians will need to update their contact information in Brightwheel directly. We cannot make those changes.

## **Child Abuse / Neglect**

All staff members are trained in child abuse/neglect identification. It is our goal to seek intervention services for families. In the best interest of the child, we are mandated reporters and will make a report to the Department of Social Services, if necessary. We will also do our best to assist families experiencing any level of crisis by sharing resources and referrals.

## **Community Advisory Board**

Our Center’s Community Advisory Board is composed of parents/guardians, school representatives, staff, and community leaders. This committee meets 2-3 times a year and acts in an advisory capacity for our program providing recommendations for improving services and operations. Parents/guardians interested in serving on this committee should inform the Director.

## **Community Resources**

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** develops partnerships and professional relations with agencies, consultants, and organizations in the community to further our program’s capacity to meet the needs of the children and families we serve. The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** maintains a list of child and family support services available in the community. This list is shared with families at their request, and assistance is available in locating and utilizing community resources that support children’s and families’ wellbeing and development. Our onsite social worker, as well as our PAT educators, are available to assist families as needs arise.

## Confidentiality

Documenting and making visible children's learning through displays, photographs, and videos is an important part of the learning culture of the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** as it allows for children and families to revisit experiences and therefore is present throughout our preschool. Additionally, photos and videos are shared with families through classroom blogs and program social media outlets (see "Connecting with Us"). Photographs and videos may also be taken during the year for release to the media, by the media, or for the center or District website. Parents/guardians will be asked to sign a "General Permission Form" which includes consent for photographs and videos. It is important to note that if a parent/guardian does not give permission for their child to be photographed or videotaped this means that the Ambrose Family Center will not allow ANY pictures or videos to be taken of your child for any reason. This would include school and district publications such as classroom photo composites, the website and classroom blogs, as well as news media including newspapers and television. Given the nature of documentation of learning at the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**, including the extensive use of classroom blogs, we do expect parents/guardians to agree to photo documentation of their child.

Pictures are a wonderful way to capture the treasured memories of your child's experiences. Digital photos and social media make sharing pictures easy to do. However, while photographing or sharing pictures of your child at **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** events, it is important to remember that families have varying views on the use of social media and how pictures of their children are used. Some parents/guardians have signed "no media" forms which should be honored by everyone who takes pictures on campus. Our responsibility is to honor all parent/guardian's requests for privacy while their child is at preschool. Therefore, parents/guardians are not to post pictures of other children on any web-based digital sharing or social media sites, including Facebook, without permission of the parents/guardians of other children included in the image or video taken. Parent-created classroom Facebook pages affiliated with the Webster Groves School District, including the Ambrose Family Center, are discouraged because of issues related to confidentiality. Please honor the confidentiality requests of our families.

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** does not share family's contact information (phone numbers, email addresses, addresses, etc.) with other families unless granted permission; however the district does allow PTO access to this information. Please work with your classroom teachers, office staff, or PTO classroom liaison when there is a need for information to be shared.

## Connecting with Us

There are several ways to stay connected to the latest learning, news, and information for the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**. Follow us on Facebook (@Walter Ambrose Family Center Preschool), and Instagram (@afcpreschool). Current information and updates can also be found on our webpage: <https://www.webster.k12.mo.us/ambrose>.

## Contagious Diseases

We will notify you if anyone in your child's classroom contracts a contagious or communicable disease. A parent/guardian information letter will be sent explaining symptoms indicating the disease. If you have suspicions that your own child has a contagious disease, you will need to contact your physician before your child can return to school. A written note may be required before your child can return. If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, please notify the nurse (314-918-4352) as soon as possible so that we may alert other parents/guardians and our staff.

## Dismissal Procedures and Late Pick Up

Children will be released from the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** only to the child's custodial parent/guardian(s) or to any individual (14 years or older), listed as an authorized person to pick up the child. Any changes or additions to the authorization list must be made through our office in writing as well as to your Brightwheel account. We also recommend authorizing the person(s) listed as your emergency contact(s) to pick up your child or be able to locate you quickly in the event that we cannot contact you. At any time, you and/or the people on the authorized list may be asked to provide picture identification upon picking up your child. This practice is strictly for the safety of your children.

All parents/guardians or authorized individuals must sign their child in and out each day with the Brightwheel app. This is one way to safeguard your child by knowing when they are here and who has picked them up. Individuals signing in children and/or signing out children must be 14 years of age or older. Due to licensing regulations, no child can be unattended at any time. Please make sure all children, regardless of age, are with you at all times (no running through the hallways ahead of you or leaving children in the lobby). Additionally, shared learning spaces (Collaboratory, ateliers, gym, playscape, etc.) require supervision of staff and therefore are not open to families (see "Dismissal Procedures").

In the event that a court-ordered legal custody situation develops, whereby a parent is not allowed to pick up the child(ren) without consent, we require that original court documents be submitted to the office verifying legal custody. The Director will review this information and a copy of the information will be placed in the child's file. Once reviewed and approved, pertinent information will be relayed to appropriate personnel at school. All information will be kept confidential.

If a parent/guardian appears to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or appears incapable of transporting their child home safely, our staff will tell them that we prefer to call another authorized person to pick up the child. If the parent/guardian refuses, we will release the child but will contact the police to indicate that we believe a child's safety is at risk. If someone other than a parent/guardian comes to pick up a child and appears to be unsafe, we will attempt to call the parents/guardians first, and then follow the above procedures.

If an emergency arises regarding the release of your child for pick up, please notify your classroom teacher via Brightwheel or call the Ambrose Family Center Preschool office. Authorization by phone can only be done in emergencies. The person will be asked to show identification.

## Late Pick-Up

When you are late to pick up your child, our schedules are also affected. Please make arrangements for someone you have authorized to pick up your child if you cannot be here by the time your child's class ends (11:15am, 3:15pm, or 5:30pm). In addition, please notify the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** office. On your first occasion of being late, you will receive a written reminder. Any time after that, you will be charged \$2.50 per minute for the first 10 minutes and \$5.00 per minute thereafter. Your account will be billed accordingly. Paying these fees is not an option for extended care. After the fourth occurrence, a meeting will be requested to explore how to support the parents/guardians with picking up on time. Habitual late pick up may result in dismissal from the program.

## Emergency Closings

Should bad weather or other adverse conditions prompt us to consider closing schools; the Webster Groves School District will make a decision as early as possible. Information will be available through the following outlets:

- Phone calls to all families through Parent Square, an automated district-wide system
- Local media: KMOV TV (Channel 4), KSDK TV (Channel 5), KTVI (Channel 2) and KMOX radio (AM 1120)
- District website <https://www.webster.k12.mo.us>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WebsterGrovesSD>
- Twitter @WebsterGrovesSD
- Brightwheel Alert

The Webster Groves School District will consider opening schools with a “late start” on inclement days when roads are expected to be cleared within a few hours. The late start time for the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is 9:30am. Late starts will be announced through the same communication outlets listed above.

## Emergency Preparedness

The Ambrose Family Center Preschool has crisis plans and procedures in place in the event of an emergency situation. Required fire drills are conducted monthly in order to practice proper procedures in the event of an emergency. We also schedule severe weather, earthquake, and intruder drills at appropriate intervals throughout the year. We make every effort to reassure the children that these measures are for the purpose of taking care of ourselves if the need arises.

Building evacuation routes are posted throughout the preschool. In case of an emergency evacuation, plans are in place to escort the children out of the building to a safe location. Please avoid coming to the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** until you have been instructed to do so. Children will not be released until emergency personnel give an all clear. Please DO NOT call the preschool directly during an emergency as this impedes important inbound and outbound calls with emergency personnel.

## Families

If a child has two homes, we will make every effort to keep both families informed. Brightwheel is our primary method of communication with families. Arrangements can be made for separate parent mailboxes in the classroom, as requested. Please notify the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** office and your classroom teachers if you would like separate mailboxes.

## Hand-washing

Licensing and accreditation requires hand-washing by all staff, volunteers, parents/guardians, and children to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases. Children are taught and practice hand-washing procedures. It is required that children and parents/guardians wash their hands upon arrival. When dropping your child off, please build in time to assist your child with hand-washing each morning.

## Ill Children

**Illness Occurring at Home:** We hope your child will be in attendance every day; however, if any sign of illness is present, please keep your child at home. To notify staff of illness or absence, please message your student's teachers through Brightwheel as soon as possible. The following symptoms could indicate a contagious disease:

Fever and/or pain	Extreme fatigue	Nausea or vomiting
Diarrhea	Skin eruptions or rash	Red or weeping eyes
Constant sneezing	Constant coughing, swelling and/or redness of the throat	

Parents/guardians are required by licensing regulations to keep their child home if ANY of the above symptoms are present. The child will be admitted to class when he/she has been free of any or all of these symptoms and has not required fever or pain medication for a minimum of 24 hours. A child who does not appear to be fully recovered from an illness will not be allowed to return to the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** per the discretion of the center's nurse.

If you have any health concerns for your child (particularly during the allergy seasons), contact the nurse to determine what accommodations can be made. Every effort to accommodate a child's need(s) will be made, taking into account limitations related to staffing and licensing regulations.

**Illness Occurring at School:** If your child becomes ill at school or exhibits symptoms related to a contagious disease, we will contact you immediately. Your child will be taken to the nurse's office for evaluation and to wait for your arrival. For non-contagious illnesses the essential question will be, can the child participate with reasonable comfort and receive adequate, appropriate care without classroom disruption. Please make sure that we have current phone numbers for you and your emergency contacts on file. We ask that you pick up your child as soon as possible, within an hour of the call at the latest.



## **Injury/Accident Guidelines & Medical Emergencies**

### **Injuries at School**

1. A child sustaining minor injuries such as bruises, scrapes, or insect bites will be treated immediately at school by the nurse or appropriate staff member who has been trained in basic first aid.
2. Parents/guardians will be notified of minor injuries via an incident report through Brightwheel. Parents/guardians will be notified of more serious injuries immediately.
3. A report of the injury will be acknowledged by parents/guardians through a Brightwheel message.

### **Medical Emergencies**

Parents/guardians are required to sign the Medical Emergency Form and are required to keep emergency contacts and phone numbers current in the office file and in Brightwheel. Staff will call for professional help (911) if a major injury occurs. Parents/guardians and/or emergency contacts will be notified immediately. If the emergency is such that immediate transportation to the hospital is necessary, an **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** staff member will accompany the child and will have the signed emergency consent form in their possession.

### **Medication**

If a child is taking any medication, please inform the nurse and share any additional information. This will help staff when observing your child and allow them to inform you of any changes observed while your child is on the medication.

### **Medication While at School**

If a child needs to take medication on a regular basis during the school day, the following steps must be followed:

1. Parent/guardian(s) must complete a Medication Authorization form, giving written permission for the nurse to administer medication to their child including the start date and completion date of the authorization; the dosage; the specific time or condition of dosage; and possible side effects.
2. The parent/guardian must sign the Medication Authorization form.
3. Medication must be in original containers on which is stated the dosage and reason for which it is given and special instructions (time of dosage, frequency of dosage, storage of medication, etc.).
4. The parent/guardian is responsible for medication being available in the school.
5. Medication and Authorization form(s) must be turned in to the nurse in the main office, not to teachers and cannot simply be placed in the child's backpack.

Medication that is to be kept at school for emergencies only (diabetes, asthma, bee sting, etc.) must include special instructions submitted in writing from parent/guardian(s) and/or physician.

## Negotiating Differences

We are all here to make every day a pleasant and satisfying experience for you and your child, but on occasion difficulties arise. We encourage families to communicate concerns and in doing so collaborate with us to find mutually agreed upon solutions that we can incorporate into practice for the betterment of all. If you have any questions about your child or the program, please talk with your teachers first. If you are unable to come to an agreement over a situation, please talk with the Director.

## Orientation Process

Being introduced to a preschool program is an exciting experience for a young child. Our focus the first few weeks of the new year is to provide the children with the consistency of a warm, secure, and supportive environment outside the home. As we work to blend home and school environments, children naturally need time to establish relationships with new adults and children and become familiar with routines and experiences. Prior to the first day of the new program year, we will host a “Meet Your Teachers” event where you and your child will meet with your child’s teachers and begin the process of acclimating to the classroom. If your child joins us at a different point in the year, we will schedule a time for you and your child to meet the teachers and see the classroom. You are always welcome to contact the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** office to check in on your child.\*

*\*Please note that teachers cannot take phone calls during class times; the best way to communicate with teachers during the day is through email, Brightwheel, or the **Ambrose Family Center** main office. For non-emergencies, your child’s teachers will respond as soon as they are available within their work day hours.*

## Parenting Education (PAT)

We know that families sometimes have questions about their child’s development. Being a parent doesn’t come with a “how-to” guide. While we know there is a lot of information available through the internet and books, it may be helpful to have an opportunity to ask an experienced professional specific questions or discuss concerns confidentially. Parenting educators working for our PAT program provide families with resource and referral information as needed. Parenting educators provide services that meet your needs and goals. Our parenting educators are a part of the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** team that connects home with school.

## Parking

All parents/guardians (Full Day and Half Day) are expected to walk their child to their classroom drop off location. All parking spaces in the lots are reserved for staff and cannot be used at any time, including during drop off and pick up. Parking is available in the circle drives and on the street. Parking in the circle drives is reserved for quick and efficient drop off and pick up. Use street parking if you plan to be in the building for a longer period of time to alleviate congestion. Please plan additional time into your schedule for arrival and pick up, especially during 8:00 – 8:45 AM and 3:00 – 3:30 PM as these are the most

congested times of the day. Accessible parking spots are available at the Cedar Avenue circle drive. We ask that people respect these reserved spots, the walkway, and the ramp that leads to the entrance.

Please, for the safety of all the children, do not leave your car running while you are in the preschool. Do not leave other children, purses, etc. unattended in your car. Keep all pets in cars. Drive carefully, slowly, and refrain from any cell phone use while on the school grounds – or as we love to say, “Hang up and Hug!” Safety of our children is first and foremost.

## **Pets**

Pets are an integral part of the lives of many of the children and families at the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**. Parents/guardians and children may want to bring in pets from home, either to visit a classroom or when arriving or departing from school. However, some children are allergic to certain animals. For this reason, arrangements must be made for any pet to be allowed on the preschool premises. These arrangements are to be made with the classroom teachers and the preschool office.

## **Security**

Your child’s safety is a top priority at the **Ambrose Family Center**. For this reason, all doors to the building will be locked at all times, including during pick up and drop off. Everyone entering the building must be buzzed in using the video doorbell system at the Cedar Ave entrance. At any time, office staff using the video doorbell system may ask visitors (including parents) to verify their reason for visiting the preschool before allowing entry. Again, this is for the safety of the children. Those visitors who refuse to verify their reason for visiting the preschool/cannot be verified will not be allowed entry. In addition, we ask that you do not hold doors open for other visitors to the building.

Per district policy, all visitors to the building (including parents) must have a photo ID on file in our Raptor Sign-In system, located in the main office. Please make sure that anyone that you have authorized to pick up or drop off your child brings their photo ID for identification.

## **Toilet Learning**

We ask that children three years of age and older be toilet trained unless there is a medical or developmental reason for a child to be unable to use the bathroom. We will work closely with families to assure success as they help their children become independent. For children still requiring diapers, parents/guardians are expected to provide disposable diapers and wipes for their child and an extra set of clothes. If you require assistance obtaining these items, please reach out to our PAT program.

## **Tours**

We invite current and future families to learn more about the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** by attending a school tour. School tours focus on understanding our philosophy and detail the preschool experience offered. Tour reservations must be made in advance with the **Ambrose Family Center** main office. These tours are for parents/guardians only.

## **Transitions**

There are two types of transitions at our preschool that involve you and your child. The first transition occurs when a child and family enters programming at the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**. In the Full Day classrooms, other than the Two-Year-Old Classrooms, children stay for a two year period in the same classroom. When children stay with their teachers for two years, strong, stable relationships are formed between families, teachers, and children. This practice naturally supports our emergent curriculum as it allows for each teacher and child to better know and understand each other. Should, after careful consideration, a decision be made to transfer a child to another classroom, parents/guardians will be a part of that process and communication between classrooms will begin to plan the transition. Typically this happens either in the beginning or end of the summer.

The second significant transition is when your child moves on to kindergarten. You will receive information on Kindergarten Registration for your child's elementary school. Your child's teachers are available to facilitate the transition from our preschool to your child's new school. All children are expected to transition to kindergarten with their cohort group (see "Kindergarten Eligibility" for more information). To keep our records current, we ask that you inform the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** main office if your child will be attending a school other than their assigned home school for kindergarten.

## **Tuition Assistance**

Tuition assistance is available to families who qualify through our Head Start and Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) partnerships. A sliding fee scale is used to determine distribution of funds. Tuition assistance will be awarded based on highest need. All assistance is subject to funding availability. **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** does not accept foster care/adoptive care subsidies at this time. For more information, please contact our social worker in the main office.

## **Withdrawal from the Program**

A child may be withdrawn from the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** by submitting a Withdrawal Form to the AFC main office two weeks prior to the requested withdrawal date. Tuition is charged through the end of the month. Notice must be received before the 15th of the month or tuition is charged for the following month. Re-enrollment into the program is based on availability. If a child is exhibiting excessive negative behaviors, families and staff will work together toward improvement, which may involve the consideration of additional services for support. If, after the implementation of additional supports, there is no improvement, we may notify the parent/guardian that the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** can no longer best serve the child's needs.

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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### Assessments/Screenings

**Developmental Screenings:** A developmental screening is provided at no charge to families. Information on fine and gross motor, speech, language, and concept development is gathered through conversation and observations. The screening will also assess your child's hearing and vision. Screenings are provided to all currently enrolled students by the center yearly. Parents/guardians may schedule additional screenings through the PAT program at 314-918-4396.

**Online Assessment – GOLD:** The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** utilizes the online assessment system, *Teaching Strategies GOLD*. *GOLD* is an ongoing observational system for assessing children and is aligned with our Project Construct curriculum, instructional goals/practices, and Missouri Early Learning Standards. This strengths-based tool uses a universal language that reflects the understanding that all children show what they know in various ways. Teachers use these objectives to focus their observations as they gather information to inform instruction.

### Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are an important milestone in the lives of young children. Birthdays place children at the center of attention for one wonderful day each year. At the **Ambrose Family Center**, children in each classroom decide as a group how to celebrate each other's birthdays through a meaningful "birthday tradition". Teachers will share with parents/guardians the "birthday tradition" for your child's classroom which does not include bringing treats from home. Please honor the very special classroom experience designed by the children as they celebrate each other's birthdays. Enjoy what is created for your child in honor of their birthday. Please let your teachers know if you do not wish for your child's birthday to be celebrated.

### Blended Age Classrooms

Regardless of where a child might be developmentally or how old they are, parents want assurance that they are placing their child in an environment where they will best learn and grow. Some classrooms at the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** are blended age groups. However, due to current enrollment needs, licensing, Head Start, DESE and SSD requirements, not all classrooms may have blended-age groups. Human development is rich, varied, and enormously complex. Child development occurs in orderly stages, but there is a great amount of variation in children as to when a stage is attained. This is particularly true of preschool-aged children. In both our blended-age classrooms and single-age classrooms, teachers prepare for and expect a wide range of abilities in the children. They focus on each child as an individual learner and work with them at their developmental level.

## Care Team

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** staff believes strongly in the potential of every child and the belief that adults must take an active role in supporting each child's individual needs. In the event teachers are perplexed on how to better connect with a child in an effort to facilitate their developmental growth, we may utilize a process known as Care Team. This process convenes a team of people who will examine the situation, make observations and collect data, and create a plan based on a child's strengths to better support the child's learning and assure a systematic approach to the interventions proposed to assist the teaching staff. Like any successful initiative, parents/guardians play a critical role in helping us work effectively with their child. Should a child potentially benefit from the Care Team, parents/guardians are notified and included in this process.

## Celebrating Diversity

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** recognizes the diversity of cultures unique to each classroom and provides opportunities for all children to learn about and respect other cultures. Teachers seek and incorporate information about family backgrounds and beliefs to make children's learning experiences more meaningful. This can be integrated into our program by using a variety of books, music, cooking, clothing, singing, storytelling, performances, conversations with families, shared learning projects, excursions, etc. - any way we can authentically celebrate, honor, and learn from our diversity. These contributions enhance our overall programming.

## Celebrations

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** strives to be sensitive to how parents/guardians teach their own children to celebrate or not celebrate various holidays. We value the diversity of our population and realize that many of us celebrate different holidays and traditions. We also have observed that preschool children are often over-stimulated by the excitement routinely associated with the adult influenced holidays. Traditional holiday parties such as Christmas, Halloween, and Valentine's Day are not child-driven celebrations for the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** – instead classrooms may be celebrating the first wooly worm, or the first missing tooth, or puddles that form after a rain shower. A favorite, simple tradition at the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** has been an all school DANCE gathering! It's just 15 minutes of spontaneous joy! Simple celebrations are more honoring of children in these early years. Our celebrations are limited to the appropriateness of the age group and the community of the classrooms. Your teachers will keep you informed of classroom and family events planned around authentic celebrations as they emerge from the children's interest and design.

## Child Guidance Philosophy/ Behavior Management

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool's** philosophy of discipline is based on respect for the child's self-esteem, setting reasonable limits and consequences, and encouraging self-discipline. Staff responds promptly and in developmentally appropriate ways to children. All staff work to foster children's emotional well-being by demonstrating respect for others and creating a positive emotional climate that is reflected in behaviors such as social conversations, shared laughter, and genuine affection.

Teachers make expectations clear and age-appropriate. Teachers provide children opportunities to develop the classroom community through participation in decision making about classroom expectations. Each classroom develops classroom expectations and routines with the children at the start of each year. Expectations are reinforced as a classroom throughout the year.

Staff are trained in and continually practice the Conscious Discipline model. Teachers encourage appropriate expression of emotion, both positive (e.g. joy, pleasure, excitement) and negative (e.g., anger, frustration, sadness). Prosocial behaviors are promoted through modeling, teaching negotiation through shared materials, encouraging listening to one another, and encouraging the help of children in providing comfort when a friend is sad or distressed. All staff listen to children with attention and respect, and respond with strategies that communicate effectively and build relationships with every child through meaningful conversations.

Teachers will work closely with your child and cooperate with parent/guardian(s) to resolve any problems that may arise. When inappropriate behavior occurs, including biting and other physical outbursts, we will:

- Redirect behavior,
- Help the child identify feelings, describe problems, and try alternative solutions,
- Inform parents/guardians when their child is involved,
- Seek to understand the child.

All of the teachers, support staff, and the Director are available to work out specific situations. Physical punishment and psychological abuse or coercion are never used by members of our staff when addressing behavior. Parents/guardians are kept up to date on a regular basis regarding their child's actions (both positive as well as not so positive). We encourage parents/guardians to take an active role in working through all situations. Please address all issues to the classroom teachers or the Director; never with another parent/guardian.

## **Clothing**

When it comes to dressing your child for preschool, comfortable, no worry clothing is best. We encourage parents/guardians to think of your child's comfort and independence and provide clothing that is free of complicated fastenings. Think of the messy art materials and other messy activities and dress your child in clothing that is washable. Think of the changeable St. Louis weather and make sure your child has appropriate outerwear available for cooler days. Please provide sweaters and jackets even on the first sunny fall days. It is much easier to remove unneeded items than to not have appropriate outerwear. During warmer weather, please provide sunscreen and insect repellent for your child. We will re-apply both with your written permission.

It is important that each child has at least one extra set of seasonally appropriate clothes in their cubby at all times. If it becomes necessary to borrow clothes, please wash them before they are returned. All clothing must be labeled with your child's name.

## Communication

One of the strengths of the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is the support we provide children and families. Parents/guardians are encouraged to be directly involved in their child's learning by volunteering at our preschool, being involved in the AFC PTO, and participating in programs and events offered throughout the year. Together parents/guardians and teachers make our school a place where children and families feel secure, supported, and share in the joys of learning. With parents' authorization via a permissions form, the PTO officers have access to all email addresses for communication purposes.

In addition to communicating with parents/guardians about their child's school life, teachers want parents/guardians to communicate about home life as well. Please know that when changes occur in the home, they often affect a child's school experience.

Our staff work in partnership with families in establishing and maintaining regular, ongoing communication. A variety of processes and systems for communicating are in place to keep families informed:

**Pick Up/Drop Off:** Our staff work extended hours that allow teachers and families to connect at drop off and pick up. While in-depth conversations cannot take place during these brief encounters, this time does provide a nice connection at the start and end of each day. Arrangements can always be made with teachers via email or Brightwheel should a more in-depth conversation be necessary. Each classroom has a parent/guardian board that contains the flow of the day, monthly menu, and other important information.

**Website:** [Ambrose Family Center / AFC Home](#). The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** website contains general information about the preschool, the current school calendar, event updates, downloadable documents, email contacts, parent/guardian notices, etc. Each classroom also has its own web page linked to our website. The classroom URL format is <https://www.webster.k12.mo.us/ambrose/classroom name>.

**Email:** You can communicate with your child's teachers or any staff member by Brightwheel or email. The email format is: [lastname.firstname@wgmail.org](mailto:lastname.firstname@wgmail.org).

**Blogs:** Classroom blogs are designed to offer parents/guardians a snapshot into the life of the preschool. Parents/guardians have an opportunity to see aspects of their child's daily experiences made visible through shared stories, photos, and videos. In addition, this documentation offers the possibility for increased awareness of a parent's/guardian's role and identity as an active participant in shared learning. Please stay tuned to your child's classroom blog page. The intention is to spark ongoing communication between you, your teachers, and your child about learning.



## Curriculum and Education Philosophy

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** follows the *Project Construct* curriculum which is approved by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Through “hands-on, minds-on experiences,” children in our *Project Construct* classrooms attain deep understandings in the core content areas while learning to work collaboratively with others and to be life-long problem solvers, critical thinkers, and innovators. The *Project Construct* philosophy guides our instruction. It is based on four principles of child development and related practices:

1. Children have an intrinsic desire to make sense of the world. What they genuinely need to know, and are genuinely interested in, drives their learning.
2. Children actively construct knowledge and values based on the physical and social world. Because their thoughts are still closely tied to action, they require a physically and mentally active learning environment.
3. In their struggle to understand the world, young children’s thinking will contain predictable errors.
4. Developmental areas are interactive and interrelated, each influencing the others. It is within the social environment that intelligence and language are fostered.

*Project Construct* offers a flexible framework for using children’s interests and curiosity about their world to lead the learning. It allows teachers to integrate their knowledge of each child, their interests and theories, as well as community and family resources into an emergent curriculum. Through questioning, deep listening, and conversation, teachers engage in collaborative inquiry to deepen and extend children’s thinking.

To authentically organize and account for this learning, teachers record observations, questions, evidence, hypotheses, and planning to facilitate learning. Experiences are documented and accountable to both the *Project Construct* standards as well as the Missouri Early Learning Standards.

To learn more about *Project Construct*, you can follow the link to the Project Construct National Center Website at: <http://www.projectconstruct.org>.

**PATH:** “PATH” is a curriculum process created by the staff at the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**. PATH is a purposeful way to document, plan, and account for constructivist learning. It is a co-constructed curriculum approach in which teachers form a community of learners with children, parents, and other teachers with the intent of children leading and informing the learning and design of future work. Such learning shifts from a study of facts to a study of meaning. PATH supplants the traditional lesson plans and lesson planning process with a way to design and account for “negotiated learning” from a spontaneous learning encounter that comes from an ordinary moment in the classroom, to expanded investigations that lead to ambitious long term projects with full emotional engagement; all the while being accountable to curriculum and assessment standards as well as state and national standards for early learning.

PATH brings forward the wisdom of teachers, rooted in collegial relations and dialogue, and evidenced in collective reflection and analysis of documentation shared at planning meetings. PATH is central to the professional growth of teachers as it is inherently co-emergent in the PATH curriculum process. Implementation of PATH building-wide brings forward a collaborative culture within the entire learning community; a place where children, families, and teachers not only take part but become a part of a culture of learning that promotes and celebrates the potential of each child to provoke, innovate, and transform their world.

Each classroom's PATH is displayed in the classroom to allow parents/guardians to contribute and further become a part of their child's learning by extending the classroom focus and experiences at home.

**Reggio Influence:** The educational philosophy of the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** embraces the work of educators in Reggio Emilia, Italy, who have developed a thoughtful, comprehensive approach to early childhood education for their community. Hailed as the best preschools in the world by Newsweek magazine in 1991, the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education has attracted the worldwide attention of educators, researchers, and those interested in early childhood education best practices. We are grateful for the opportunity to study in Italy, engaging with other educators through shared dialogues and initiatives. This dialogue in Reggio Emilia has helped us to create deeper understandings about learning, further defining and giving shape to our work with children, their families, and with one another.

The Reggio Emilia approach is not a curriculum but a philosophy that strengthens our child-originated/teacher-facilitated curriculum and offers new insight and understanding into the image of the child as being full of intelligence, curiosity, and wonder.

As reflected in our vision, mission, and beliefs, we visualize a transformative preschool learning community with an identity reflective of the setting, a community in which beliefs are defined and lived, a system of relationships through which meaning, understanding, and knowledge are constructed. Our preschool community works to support a shared responsibility for a quality preschool. More information on the Reggio Approach can be found at: <http://www.reggiochildren.it/?lang=en>.

## **Family Events**

At the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**, our belief in shared learning drives the way in which all adults (stakeholders, staff, and families) work together in support of our children. We are committed to productive conversations, communication, and experiences that put children and their learning first. Further, we are committed to fostering relationships between and among our families by providing opportunities that blend school with home through experiences that reflect and honor the values and cultures unique to each family. In all these efforts, our work is towards authentically sharing together with a sense of wellbeing for all.

Throughout the year we will have planned events for our families that celebrate children – what they can teach us and how they learn. We will give you advance notice of each event via classroom and program calendars, emails, through postings on our website, as well as sharing the information on our social media outlets (Facebook and Instagram). Please note that some events are designed for families

(parents/guardians and children) and others for parents/guardians and staff to listen and learn from one another.

### **Field Trips**

We believe that learning cannot be contained in a classroom. Field trips are neighborhood walking excursions that help both children and teachers learn more about community resources. Children learn through experiences, and excursions add an important dimension to their learning. We have found that walking trips are the most successful for our young learners. Some of our favorite spots to visit are the fire station, the bird sanctuary (“The Forest”), Straub’s Market, Rolling Ridge Nursery, the sculpture park, or just a walk around the block. The teachers will inform parents/guardians of these trips, and you are always encouraged to participate.

### **Group Learning**

At the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**, children often work in small groups offering a space for thought to take shape as ideas are expressed and compared with others’ interpretations. Through shared learning experiences, new meaning is generated and negotiated, and a strong relationship between children is fostered. Whole group conversations occur during class meetings and offer space and time for re-knowing or recognition of ongoing learning. Time is dedicated to proposals for pedagogical work – sharing of images, noticing, and small exhibits, sharing the work of small groups – through conversations between children and following their lead. We look for ways to move forward together, facilitating a constant and authentic exchange of learning between small and whole groups.

### **Inclusive Education**

At the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** we believe that every child is curious and playful by nature. Central to this belief is a commitment that all children deserve the right to learn in an environment that supports his or her unique needs. These beliefs have driven the development of the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool’s** philosophy on the provision of services to children with special rights (often referred to as special education needs) through developmentally rich experiences.

At the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**, we have a long standing partnership with the Special School District in order to fully support special education services for our children. Our preschool embraces inclusive education and is committed to fostering community and belonging by having children with a wide range of unique abilities represented in each classroom. Children with special rights are enrolled in all of our classrooms. Our Half Day classrooms are team-taught with one early childhood special education teacher and one early childhood general education teacher, with the exception of two classrooms where there is no general education teacher. Our Full Day classrooms, with two general education teachers, support special education rights and welcome therapists and paraprofessional staff to provide additional support as deemed necessary. Specialists include, but are not limited to, an occupational therapist, speech and language pathologists, a physical therapist, ABA therapists, a mental health consultant, and vision impaired/orientation and mobility instructors.

Services for children with special rights are carried out in a mindful manner. The naturally occurring environment for all children is adaptive and inclusive. All staff are committed to working with children in a responsive way. **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** and Special School District staff believe in starting with all children "where they are." This strategy requires knowing the child well and having good communication with the child's family. Observation is used extensively for children with special rights, as with all children, in order to gain insight into the child's thinking process and understanding of self. Our staff believes that taking the time to know the children and finding out what motivates them is more valuable than following a rote routine.

Our commitment to children and families with special rights is a central part of our effort to serve diverse populations. All children have the right to a preschool experience that is of the highest quality. The hope for children and adults to appreciate and respect all people, including their differences and similarities, is at the heart of our program.

### **Kindergarten Eligibility**

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** supports current research and best practices affirming that children are ready to enter kindergarten when they reach the legal chronological age of entry eligibility. We, therefore, expect all age eligible children (five years of age by August 1) to transition to kindergarten. We are confident that the investment and commitment shown by our staff, and with your shared support, ensures that we have provided every child, to the best of our ability, the necessary foundation critical to both a successful transition and learning journey as they enter school-age programming. Please note that we are unable to provide preschool programming to children at the **Ambrose Family Center** who are of kindergarten-eligible age or older.

### **Meals**

Our Full Day program provides breakfast, lunch, and a snack. Our Half Day program provides a small snack. Meals are served family-style with classroom teachers sitting with the children and encouraging a relaxed environment. We encourage and discuss manners, good hygiene, self-help skills, and nutrition information before, during, and after meals. A menu will be posted on the classroom parent/guardian information board monthly. We follow USDA standards for our food program. Calories, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, protein, fat, fiber, vitamin A and vitamin C levels are all dictated based upon the age of the child. District menus are analyzed to assure the daily allowance of the guidelines are strictly followed. A spreadsheet of Recommended Daily Allowances (RDA) is available in our office for your review.

Breakfast for Full Day classrooms is served from 8:00am – 8:30am. Your child must be here by 8:25am in order to receive breakfast. Lunch for Full Day is served from 10:55 am -12:00 pm and Full Day snack is served after nap.

Please provide written documentation from your child's doctor regarding food allergies that must be a consideration. If your child is on a special diet, please work closely with the nurse to determine what meals might be allowed. Licensing requirements does not allow home prepared meals. While the food

service company, Chartwells, will accommodate children with documented allergies, we request that children without allergies be served the menu for the day. Food preferences are not acceptable reasons for individual food preparation.

## **Outdoor Learning / Playscape**

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** recognizes and values the importance of outdoor play for our children. In addition, licensing requires our children to be outside (weather permitting) for a total of thirty minutes each day for our Half Day program and sixty minutes each day for our Full Day program. Please make sure your children have appropriate outerwear to play outside. We also ask that your child wear tennis shoes to enhance their gross motor development and assure safety.

Our natural “playscape” is an integral part of our preschool as it reflects the child-centered strengths and commitments of the program. Natural playgrounds are play environments that blend natural materials, structures, and native vegetation with creative landforms to challenge and fascinate children and teach them about the wonders and complexities of the natural world while they play. Play components include earth shapes (hills, contours, sun paths), native vegetation (trees, shrubs, grasses, flowers, lichens, mosses), boulders and rock structures, dirt and sand, textured pathways, and water features. Specific components of our playscape include a boulder amphitheater with stage, a large, free-form sand play area, a fairy garden, an embedded hill slide, a river, a climbing wall, a boat, gardens, rock climbing areas, an outdoor atelier (studio), a sensory garden and many other play and learning elements that the children will define. Our natural playscape is accessible to all enrolled children and provokes social and learning opportunities including opportunities for movement and physical activity, for seating and quiet play, and for exploration and creativity. Children who play and learn outdoors laugh more, become more adventurous, self-motivated, and they are better able to understand and assess risk.

Please dress your child for outdoor experiences as we will be outside nearly every day. If it has been a good day, your child will be dirty as the advantages outweigh the detriment of getting dirty. Finally, please consider participating in the care of this unique space. Our PTO, as well as classrooms, will offer opportunities for you to become involved in caretaking! We ALWAYS have weeds!

## **Parent/Guardian Involvement**

As a child’s first and most important teacher, parents/guardians are vital to the work we do at the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool**. Parents/guardians are encouraged to participate in their child’s education as fully as possible. We offer many opportunities throughout the year for you to become involved in your child’s preschool experience. Families are welcome to visit the preschool during the program’s regular hours of operation. Please make arrangements to do so through the office or with your child’s teachers.

We know that our parents/guardians are great resources! If you have a special skill or talent that you would like to share with us (such as playing an instrument, a special collection, job experience, hobby, etc.), please talk with your child’s teachers to make arrangements. Individual classes will offer experiences such as class learning celebrations and walking field trips. Please talk with your child’s

teachers about how you can contribute to your child's classroom. There are also District and building committees where parents/guardians can volunteer their time and expertise to benefit their child and the community. Please note that all adults wishing to volunteer at the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** must, per district policy, fill out a volunteer application on the district website prior to their first day of volunteering and then provide a photo ID to be scanned into the Raptor sign-in system (located in the main office) each time that they volunteer.

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is always in motion; we are continuously improving the quality of the work we do for our children. A parent/guardian survey is conducted periodically for the purpose of gathering important information and feedback to help us in our planning for continuous improvement. We value your input. Thank you for supporting our growth and continuing to be an important part of why we are recognized for excellence.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Conferences allow for meaningful exchanges between families and school. Meetings can occur at any time informally and more formally twice a year, in the fall and again in the spring. Fall and spring conferences allow for a conversation on progress, updates, and celebrations. We take pride in having 100% parent/guardian participation at our parent/teacher conferences.

### **Personal Items**

Classrooms are adequately equipped with items of special interest to young children. However, it can be comforting for a child to have something from home to share with classmates or during rest time. Please talk with your classroom teachers prior to bringing items from home.

To prevent confusion on having the same toy or articles of clothing, all personal items should be labeled with the child's name. Please encourage your child to keep items in their cubby so that the items do not become lost.

We do not allow anything that encourages aggressive play (toy guns, action figures, knives, etc.), and we discourage bringing money, jewelry, and expensive items. We will not replace items brought from home that become lost or broken at the preschool.

### **Rest Time**

State Licensing requires our children in the Full Day program to have a rest period during the course of the day. Our Full Day preschoolers take their quiet time/nap from approximately 12:45pm – 2:15pm; two year olds until 2:45pm. If after 30 minutes a child is still awake, they may do quiet activities on their cot.

During rest time, the lighting is reduced and soft music plays. Cot sheets are provided and are laundered at least once a week by our staff. Families are asked to provide a light blanket (and small pillow if desired) marked with your child's name. Blankets are taken home weekly by families for laundering.

## **Schedules – Flow of the Day**

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** is a purposefully and joyfully active place. Organization is a central part of how our preschool works. Organization gives quality to the ways we are together and move through our day. We believe that time belongs to the children. If an experience is keeping the children engaged, we will follow the lead of the children which creates a flow to the day. The “Flow of the Day” is posted in each classroom and is meant to be emergent. Meals and nap are our only two “appointments” in our day. All Ambrose staff - cook, nurse, office staff, therapists, custodians, maintenance people, etc. may be part of the learning and teaching that occurs daily based on what the children are discovering and questioning.

## **Staffing Ratios**

A 1-to-10 teacher/child ratio will be maintained or exceeded in the **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** classrooms at all times. A 1-to-7 teacher/child ratio is maintained or exceeded for the two year old room. Additional staff is assigned to support classroom learning as needed and providing a third teacher in the room is preferred.

## **Teacher as Researcher**

The **Ambrose Family Center Preschool** embraces a culture of research, mindfulness, and empathy. Permanent and continual professional learning is an attitude in the life of the preschool; a way of thinking with others and seeing ourselves through others eyes, through other ways of seeing. Teacher research is a part of our accountability toward understanding each child and the process of learning. All children and teachers are researchers that share wonder and curiosity; searching and researching.

## **Volunteers**

We encourage parents/guardians and members of our community to volunteer their time and/or expertise at our preschool. We have benefited from many volunteers participating in our program including partnerships through Webster University, Saint Louis University, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Webster Groves High School service programs, and other area high school, university, and community programs. We provide learning opportunities through school study groups and placements for university practicum students. Webster Groves School District policy requires all volunteers (including parent volunteers) to fill out a volunteer application on our district website prior to their first day of volunteering and provide a photo ID to be scanned into our Raptor sign-in system, located in the main office, each time they volunteer. Volunteers also participate in a brief training before entering into a classroom experience. Please note that we do not count volunteers into our ratios of teacher per child.

## **Equity Resolution**

In 2001, the Webster Groves School District created a resolution which acknowledged historic discrepancies in learning and performance among groups of children in its schools and resolved to eliminate those discrepancies by working together with others. While progress has been made, disparities still exist. The following proclamation is written to declare the district's commitment to creating a safe, nurturing, and supportive culture and environment where everyone feels valued for who he or she is and where discrepancies in learning and performance among groups are no longer found.

WHEREAS, the Webster Groves School District's commitment to equity and justice will be consistently expressed in words and actions.

WHEREAS, we recognize the importance of understanding the aspects of our district community's history which were especially unjust and inequitable for people of color, and the effect they still have on all children and families today.

WHEREAS, we believe in the dignity and worth of every person regardless of his or her race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, ability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, or any other individual characteristic.

WHEREAS, the mission of the district is to ensure "academic and personal success" for every child.

WHEREAS, the core values of the district include diversity, individuality, community, and courage.

WHEREAS, we believe in fostering equity, justice, acceptance, dignity and equal rights for all children and adults.

WHEREAS, we strive to remove social, cultural and educational barriers that members of our district community may experience through learning, advocacy, and community partnerships.

WHEREAS, we believe we must directly confront issues of bias and social injustice in order to eliminate the inequitable practices and unsafe environments these issues create for everyone.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Webster Groves School District Board of Education on this date May 31, 2017, affirms its commitment to lead efforts to advance a culture of equity and justice leading to better lives for all, including but not limited to the elimination of disparities which exist across groups of children in this school district.



## **Anti-Bias Anti-Racism Policy**

The Webster Groves School District (WGSD) rejects all forms of racism and bias as destructive to the district's mission, vision, values and goals. The district is committed to the following principles: (1) Establishing and sustaining a school district community that shares the collective responsibility and is held accountable to address, eliminate and prevent actions, decisions and outcomes that result from and perpetuate racism and bias; (2) Cultivating the unique gifts, talents and interests of every student; (3) Eliminating inequitable practices to end the predictive value of social or cultural factors such as race, socioeconomic status or gender on student success; (4) Respecting and validating diversity; and (5) Acknowledging that racism and biases are often compounded by other forms of discrimination including, but not limited to, those protective classes referenced in policy AC, which prohibits discrimination or harassment based upon any characteristics protected by law. All WGSD staff members and students are responsible for being in compliance with this policy and actively participating in all related programs, professional learning, activities, etc. The WGSD will not tolerate any racist or biased acts. Students or staff committing such acts will be disciplined in accordance with applicable district policies and will be provided with training. The complete district policy is available on the district website [www.webster.k12.mo.us](http://www.webster.k12.mo.us).

### **Prohibition Against Illegal Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation (Notice of Non-discrimination)**

The Webster Groves School District Board of Education is committed to maintaining a workplace and educational environment that is free from illegal discrimination, harassment and retaliation in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs, services, activities and facilities. In accordance with law, the district strictly prohibits discrimination and harassment against employees, students or others on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law. The Webster Groves School District is an equal opportunity employer.

The board also prohibits:

1. Retaliatory actions including, but not limited to, acts of intimidation, threats, coercion or discrimination against those who:
  - a) Make complaints of illegal discrimination or harassment.
  - b) Report illegal discrimination or harassment.
  - c) Participate in an investigation, formal proceeding or informal resolution, whether conducted internally or externally, concerning illegal discrimination or harassment.
2. Aiding, abetting, inciting, compelling or coercing illegal discrimination, harassment or retaliatory actions.
3. Discrimination, harassment or retaliation against any person because of such person's association with a person protected from discrimination or harassment in accordance with this policy and law.

As used in this policy, "discrimination, harassment or retaliation" has the same meaning as "illegal discrimination, harassment or retaliation" and is limited to acts prohibited by law. All employees, students and visitors must immediately report to the district for investigation any incident or behavior that could constitute discrimination, harassment or retaliation in accordance with this policy. If a student alleges sexual misconduct on the part of any district employee to any person employed by the district, that person

will immediately report the allegation to the Children's Division (CD) of the Department of Social Services in accordance with state law.

The board designates the following individuals to act as the district's compliance officers:

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Director of Learning Support Services, and  
 Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
 Webster Groves School District  
 400 E. Lockwood  
 Webster Groves, MO 63119  
 Phone: 314-961-1233 / Fax: 314-918-4023  
 Email: [TitleIX@wgmail.org](mailto:TitleIX@wgmail.org)

The complete district policy is available on the district website [www.webster.k12.mo.us](http://www.webster.k12.mo.us).

### **Sexual Harassment Under Title IX**

The Webster Groves School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs and activities, including employment and admissions, as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX). All forms of sex-based discrimination are prohibited in the district, but this policy focuses exclusively on sexual harassment as defined in Title IX that occurs within the education programs and activities of the district. However, the district will respond promptly to investigate and address any report or complaint of sexual harassment.

"Sexual harassment under Title IX" is conduct on the basis of sex within the scope of the district's education programs or activities (as defined in this policy) that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. An employee of the district conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit or service of the district on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the district's education program or activity; or
3. "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8) or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30).

If a student alleges sexual misconduct on the part of any district employee to any person employed by the district, that person will immediately report the allegation to the Children's Division (CD) of the Department of Social Services in accordance with state law and district policy. Any person may report sexual harassment regardless of whether the person is the alleged victim (complainant). However, Board members and employees must immediately report to the Title IX coordinator any incident or behavior that could constitute sexual harassment or retaliation in accordance with this policy. Reports may be made at any time, including during nonbusiness hours, by using the telephone number, email address or office address listed below. The Board authorizes the following individual(s) to serve as the Title IX coordinator(s) for the Webster Groves School District and coordinate and implement the district's efforts to comply with the requirements of Title IX.

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources  
 Webster Groves School District  
 400 E. Lockwood  
 Webster Groves, MO 63119  
 Phone: 314-961-1233 / Fax: 314-918-4023

Email: [TitleIX@wgmail.org](mailto:TitleIX@wgmail.org)

The complete district policy is available on the district website [www.webster.k12.mo.us](http://www.webster.k12.mo.us).

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding accessibility and the nondiscrimination policies:

Tina Clark-Scott  
Director of Learning Support Services, Webster Groves School District  
400 East Lockwood Avenue  
Webster Groves, MO 63119  
314-961-1233

**Thank you for taking the time to become well informed about the Ambrose Family Center  
Preschool. It truly is a wonderful, happy place for children, families, and our staff!**