

# ISD 199 Inver Grove Heights Little Spartans Community Preschool FAMILY HANDBOOK 2025-2026

Welcome to ISD 199 Little Spartans Preschool!  
[www.ighEarlyLearning.org](http://www.ighEarlyLearning.org)  
(651) 306-7503 / Email: [Preschool@isd199.org](mailto:Preschool@isd199.org)



IGH Community Preschool has achieved the highest *four star rating* from Parent Aware.



# IGH PRESCHOOL 2025-2026

**Early Learning Office & Early Learning Center\* . . . . . 651-306-7503**

***\*This is the main office for all district preschool classes - Office Hours Mon-Fri 7:30-3:30***

Address: 3203 68th St E, Inver Grove Heights MN 55076 (connected to Hilltop, Door 2) / Email: [Preschool@isd199.org](mailto:Preschool@isd199.org)

Director of Early Learning, Melissa Hendrickson . . . . .	651-306-7504
Administrative Assistant, Bridgett Johnson . . . . .	651-306-7503
Early Learning Coach, Mora Slifka . . . . .	651-306-7532
English Learner Coach/Parent Support, Patricia Nix . . . . .	651-306-7505
Social Worker, Ann Sahr-Woltman . . . . .	651-306-7506



**Early Learning Center (ELC) - 3203 68th St E, IGH 55076**  
**ELC Office: 651-306-7503**

3's Preschool Teacher, Stephanie Olson . . . . . 651-306-7507  
 Email: [olsonst@isd199.org](mailto:olsonst@isd199.org)

Early Childhood Special Education Teachers  
 Marina Kojic-Zepackic, 651-306-7517 Email: [KojiczepackicM@isd199.org](mailto:KojiczepackicM@isd199.org)



**Hilltop Elementary Preschool - 3201 68th St E, IGH 55076**  
**Hilltop Office: 651-306-7400**

Preschool Teacher Alex Moore (AM & PM Room A-5) . . 651-306-7415  
 Email: [MooreA@isd199.org](mailto:MooreA@isd199.org)

Preschool Teacher Ashley Thiel (AM & PM Room A-11). . . . . 651-306-7411  
 Email: [ThielA@isd199.org](mailto:ThielA@isd199.org)

Early Childhood Special Education Teacher, Melissa Yesberger . . .  
 Melissa Yesberger, 651-306-7516 Email: [YesbergerM@isd199.org](mailto:YesbergerM@isd199.org)



**Pine Bend Elementary - 9875 Inver Grove Trail, IGH 55076**  
**Pine Bend Office: 651-306-7700**

Preschool Teacher Emily Guptill/ Long term Sub Nancy VonWald (All day class)  
 651-306-7761 Email: [GuptillE@isd199.org](mailto:GuptillE@isd199.org)\VonwaldN@isd199.org

Preschool Teacher Erin Miller (AM / PM class) . . . . . 651-306-7764  
 Email: [MillerE@isd199.org](mailto:MillerE@isd199.org)

Early Childhood Special Education Teacher, Dawn Banks . . . .651-306-7709  
 Email: [BanksD@isd199.org](mailto:BanksD@isd199.org)



**Salem Hills Elementary - 5899 Babcock Trail, IGH 55077**  
**Salem Hills Office: 651-306-7300**

Preschool Teacher Bryant Dentz . . . . . 651-306-7304  
 Email: [dentzb@isd199.org](mailto:dentzb@isd199.org)

Early Childhood Special Education Teacher, Marisa Peterson .  
 651-306-7305 Email: [PetersonMA@isd199.org](mailto:PetersonMA@isd199.org)

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

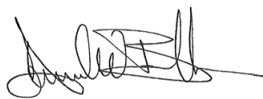
Dear Students and Families,

Welcome to Inver Grove Heights Schools. Our mission is “Inspire. Innovate. Excel. A Community Commitment.” We are proud of the strong and supportive ISD 199 school community, and we are committed to providing the best experience possible for our students.

This commitment is evident in our district’s strategic plan, which includes our mission, vision, core values, and strategic directions. The vision emphasizes an inclusive, respectful, safe, and caring environment; a culture of high expectations; whole student development; personalized learning; and an involved and invested community and district. This vision, along with our core values of courage, excellence, inclusion, innovation, and teamwork, are reflected in our student expectations and serve as a foundation for a positive, safe, and successful student learning environment.

As a community, we will work together to provide an environment with opportunities to support student learning and growth as a foundation for their future success

Sincerely,



Dave Bernhardson



**Dave Bernhardson**  
*Superintendent*

**District Office**  
2990 80<sup>th</sup> Street East  
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076  
**Phone:** 651-306-7800  
**Fax:** 651-306-7295  
**BernhardsonD@isd199.org**

### **Mission**

Inspire. Innovate. Excel.  
A Community Commitment.

### **Vision**

- Inclusive, respectful, safe, and caring environment
- A culture of high expectations
- Whole student development
- Personalized learning
- Involved and invested community and district

### **Core Values**

**Courage** *Advocating for what is important and acting with integrity*

**Excellence** *Inspiring, engaging, and challenging ourselves and others*

**Inclusion** *Building caring and authentic relationships*

**Innovation** *Using flexibility and creativity to meet challenges and needs*

**Teamwork** *Sharing responsibility, accountability, and accomplishments*

### **Strategic Directions**

- A culture of racial equity
- Career and college readiness with core life skills
- Effective teams and partnerships

*Mission and vision statements approved by ISD 199 School Board on September 22, 2021.*

## **Stay Informed**

### **Infinite Campus Parent Portal**

The Infinite Campus Parent Portal gives parents and guardians access to accurate, current, and confidential information about their student, including attendance and grades. Visit [www.isd199.org/parents/campus](http://www.isd199.org/parents/campus) to access the portal and for more information.

### **199 Reporter**

The 199 Reporter is a quarterly publication that is mailed to every district family and resident within the Inver Grove Heights Schools boundaries. This newsletter includes announcements from the district and stories about our students and staff.

### **Inspire 199 e-Newsletter**

Families and community members are invited to subscribe to the Inspire 199 e-Newsletter. The e-newsletter includes districtwide information and important announcements in an email at the end of each month. Visit [tinyurl.com/inspire199](http://tinyurl.com/inspire199) to sign up.

### **[www.isd199.org](http://www.isd199.org)**

Check our district website, [www.isd199.org](http://www.isd199.org), for everything from district and school current events to school closure announcements.

# LITTLE SPARTANS COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## **PRESCHOOL**

District 199 Little Spartans Preschool is a school readiness program. Children who are age 3 on Sept 1st attend class at the Early Learning Center. Four-year-old classes are at Hilltop, Pine Bend, and Salem Hills Elementary Schools. The office for all preschool programs is in the Early Learning Center. We have a variety of classroom settings, including collaborative classrooms with Early Childhood Special Education.

## **VISION**

To be a place where each family is welcome and each child is engaged in meaningful and joyful learning that leads to success in school and life.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Children learn best when they have positive relationships with adults in and out of the classroom and when they can engage in opportunities to discover, explore, experience and reflect in a playful environment. A partnership with families is critical for optimal school success.

## **CORE VALUES**

In addition to ISD 199 core values, Little Spartans Preschool has adopted expectations for ethical conduct based on the position statement from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), found at [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

*We have made a commitment to:*

- *Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle*
- *Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn*
- *Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family*
- *Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society*
- *Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)*
- *Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues*
- *Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect*

## **ACADEMIC SKILLS**

Children learn through playful, hands-on classroom experiences. Opportunities to experience, explore and practice are carefully planned with intentional guidance from caring, knowledgeable teachers. Curriculum aligns with the Minnesota State Standards and promotes skill development in all areas needed for Kindergarten. Research-based curriculum is used, including FrogStreet 2020 and Conscious Discipline. Teachers measure individual child progress in our comprehensive online assessment tool, Teaching Strategies Gold.

## PROGRAM BASICS

### PRESCHOOL TIMES AND LOCATIONS

#### Little Spartans 4-year-old Preschool:

##### **Hilltop Elementary**

3201 68th St E  
AM Class 7:50-10:30  
PM Class 11:45-2:30

##### **Pine Bend Elementary**

9875 Inver Grove Trl  
AM Class 7:50-10:30  
PM Class 11:45-2:30  
All Day Class 7:50-2:30

##### **Salem Hills**

5889 Babcock Trail  
AM Class 7:50-10:30

#### Little Spartans 3-year-old Preschool:

##### **IGH Early Learning Center**

3203 68th St E (Next to Hilltop, Door 2)  
AM Classes 8:15-10:45  
PM Classes 11:45-2:15

### PRESCHOOL CALENDARS

Every family will be given a preschool class calendar. Please note that there are some differences between the preschool calendar and the K-12 calendar, especially during conference times.

### RATIO OF ADULTS TO CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

IGH Preschool follows state guidelines.

3-year old classes: 1 adult for every 8 children. Maximum of 16 children/class.

4-year olds: 1 adult for every 10 children. Maximum of 20 children/class.

### ATTENDANCE

If your child will not be in class, we ask that you call and leave a message with the Early Learning Attendance Line, 651-306-7510 or contact your child's classroom teacher by email. Teacher emails are listed on the inside cover of this book. Consistent attendance is a requirement.

When students are absent for 15 consecutive days, the parent will be contacted and the child may be dropped from the program. Consideration for documented health conditions is given.

### CUSTODY ISSUES

In the event that a court ordered legal custody situation develops where a parent, or parents, are not allowed to pick up your child/ children without your consent, notify the office and provide a copy of your legal custody papers. The school **must** have appropriate copies of the court papers. **Without such information, the school will assume joint legal custody and joint physical custody.**

### WITHDRAWING FROM THE PROGRAM

Parents/Guardians are required to give at least two weeks of notice before withdrawing from preschool.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD SCREENING

Early Childhood Screening must be completed within 60 days of starting preschool. Appointments fill up fast, so book early. Screenings are at the IGH Early Learning Center. To schedule, *Call* 651-306-7503 or *Book Online* at <https://earlylearning.isd199.org> (*En Español: 651-306-7505*)

## PROGRAM PROCEDURES & POLICIES

### **DISCIPLINE**

One of the central developmental tasks of early childhood is to develop self-regulation and social skills. This ability is one of the most important factors in later school success. In our program, developmentally appropriate child guidance procedures are used to assist children in developing the social and emotional skills they need to be successful in their interactions with others and to understand social rules and expectations.

Early Learning staff are professionally trained to understand the behavior of children at different stages of development. The program's policy on guidance is based on respect and positive interactions. Emphasis is on fostering self-esteem and cooperation. Self-discipline is the goal.

An important focus of our program is the instruction of social and emotional skills. Your child's teacher will be actively engaged in helping your child learn how to express emotions appropriately, identify emotions in others, develop friendship skills, and use problem solving and language to express their needs and concerns. Our Early Learning Social Worker also works with each classroom to help teach skills and support social-emotional development.

If there seems to be a change in a child's behavior or your child has behavior that is causing a concern, program staff will communicate and problem-solve with you. Your input is important as we work together to better understand your child and help them develop these important skills.

### **PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH**

On occasion, district communication staff or the Early Learning program staff will take pictures for the purposes of catalogs and other publications, including district social media platforms. . The Early Learning program does not release children's names with published pictures. Parents/guardians give or deny consent to use photos and/or videos at the time of registration. If you wish to change your approval at any time, please call the preschool office at 651-306-7503.

### **PERSONAL DEVICE PROCEDURES**

Inver Grove Heights Schools limits student use of personal devices, like cell phones and smart watches. Cell phones and other personal devices like smart watches must be turned off and put away during the academic school day.

#### **Why do we require personal devices like cell phones and smart watches to be off and put away during school?**

In addition to fulfilling the requirements of Minnesota State Statute 121A.73, limiting personal device use and possession will also pave the way for more learning and connection in our school.

#### **What are the expectations around cell phones and other personal devices?**

- If a student chooses to bring their cell phone or other personal device to school, it must be turned off and put away in their backpack or locker during the school day. These devices will not be allowed at any time during the school day, including at lunch.

ISD 199 is not responsible for any non-school issued devices on school property (including on buses).

### **SCHOOL CENSUS INFORMATION**

Funding for Early Childhood Programs is based on the number of children birth to kindergarten who are listed in the school census. Being on the census also ensures you get information about programs, catalogs,

and registration. Help keep the census information up to date by notifying us of additional children or any changes in address. Call Bridgett at 651-306-7503.

## IGH PRESCHOOL TUITION AND FUNDING

### IGH PRESCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING

Little Spartans Preschool is governed by the policies and procedures of the Inver Grove Heights School District. The program is funded by tuition fees and subsidized by School District (ISD 199) and Minnesota Department of Education School Readiness and Voluntary PreK funds. Additional funding is provided through the State of Minnesota's Pathways II scholarship program. As a 4-Star rated program, IGH preschool can also accept Pathways I scholarships.

### PAYING TUITION

Tuition is paid in nine equal installments, September through May.

Invoices are billed on the 20th of the prior month, and due on the 10th. (Example: An invoice for September tuition will be sent August 20. Payment is due on September 10.) If your payment is not received by the 10th of each month, a \$10 late fee will be charged to your account.

Log in to your TriDistrict Community Education Account to pay tuition.

<https://tridistrict.thatscommunityed.com/account/sign/in>

Auto-pay can be set up on your account. Payments can also be made at the Early Learning Office with cash, a credit card, or check payable to ISD 199 Preschool. For help, or to pay over the phone, call 651-306-7503.

*If you are not able to make payments, contact the Early Learning Office right away to discuss options before your account is overdue.*

### TUITION REFUNDS AND CREDITS

Refunds or credits are not given for emergency school closing days or days when children are absent due to illness, vacations, etc.

### FINANCIAL AID

Financial Aid is limited and we work to support as many qualifying families as possible. Families receiving financial aid must turn in all required paperwork before the child can attend class. This includes an Educational Benefits Application and any paperwork sent out by the office. If you need help, call us at (651)306-7503. Consistent attendance is required to maintain financial assistance.

### EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT APPLICATIONS

This application is required for any preschool child who is receiving financial assistance, regardless of whether the child eats meals at school. Families who apply and qualify for Educational Benefits receive deals on school device protection plans, school activity fees, school event admission like prom, internet services, local memberships, and more! Plus, every qualifying Educational Benefits Application provides about \$1,500 to your child's school for student support services. To learn more and apply, visit [www.isd199.org/edu-benefits](http://www.isd199.org/edu-benefits).

## PICK UP / DROP OFF AND BUSSING INFORMATION

### STUDENT DROP OFF AND PICK UP

Detailed drop off and pick up procedures will be explained by your child's teacher at the beginning of the school year. Parents are expected to stay with their child at the school entrance until they are met by the classroom staff.

**If you arrive late for class you will need to park and walk your child to the office. Preschool children must never be dropped off at the curb without an adult to walk them inside the building.**

If you are picking up your child early for any reason, please stop in the office to sign them out. On occasion, there will be substitute teachers in your child's classroom. Be prepared to show ID at all times.

*Understand that during drop off and pick up time, preschool staff are focusing on greeting children and keeping them safe. Teachers are not able to have extended conversations with parents during pick-up and drop-off times. Please use other methods of communication such as Parentsquare or email. Staff will be happy to set up a time to talk with you when students are not in class.*

### LATE PICK UP POLICY

Parents or other authorized adults are responsible for picking up your child from the classroom and/or bus stop on time. If no one is at the bus stop to pick up your child, or you are 10 minutes late picking up from school and we have not heard from you, we will call you & your emergency contacts. If you or your emergency contacts can not be reached, after 60 minutes the staff will meet with administrative staff to determine next steps to keep your child safe. As a last resort, police and/or social services may be called.

***Keep your contact information up to date!!***

**TIP:** Program the phone numbers of your child's classroom (inside cover), and the Early Learning Office (651) 306-7503 into your cell phone so you will recognize the school phone number if we are trying to call you. It will also make it easier to find school phone numbers if you need to contact us.

### BUS TRANSPORTATION

Staff members will meet children at the bus when they arrive at school and take them to the bus at the end of each school day. *Parents or childcare providers are responsible for walking preschool children to the bus stop and staying with them until they get on the bus from home. After school, parents or childcare providers must be waiting at the bus stop when the bus arrives.* Please be ready for the bus 5-10 minutes before the scheduled time.

Preschool students ride the bus with K-5 students on the early morning and late afternoon routes. We request that preschool students sit at the front of the bus. Older siblings may sit with them.

Each preschool bus rider will be given a tag that should be kept on their backpack at all times.

### PROCEDURE FOR PRESCHOOL STUDENTS WHEN NO ONE IS AT THE BUS STOP AT DROP OFF TIME

*For children who attend morning preschool & are dropped off at mid-day:* When an adult is not at the bus stop to meet the child's bus, the driver will finish the route and make a second attempt to drop off. If no one is at the bus stop on the second attempt, for AM classes, your child will be returned to the school they attend. *If your child is on the late afternoon bus and the adult is not at the bus stop, the child will be returned to the **Early Learning Center** connected to Hilltop Elementary School, Door 2 and we will contact parents and emergency contacts.*

*Your child's safety is our priority. Two issues of no adult at the bus stop/late pickup may require a meeting with the Director or District Support Staff to problem solve together so the child is able to continue bus transportation. If there continues to be an issue with no adult at the bus stop, bus transportation will be canceled.*

### **RIDING THE SCHOOL BUS IS A PRIVILEGE**

Transportation safety guidelines are established to help ensure the safest ride possible for your student on the school bus. Riding the school bus is a privilege. Each student has a right to a safe, non-coercive environment on the school bus while riding to and from school. Each student, preschool through grade 12, has the responsibility to follow the direction of the driver and established safety guidelines. Failure to do so adversely affects the safety of all other passengers and will result in action being taken. This action may include but is not limited to assigned seats and/or suspension of riding privileges.

The school bus driver has sole responsibility for the safety of his or her passengers and the condition of his or her vehicle. With this, the driver is given the authority and responsibility to enforce the safety guidelines as established by Inver Grove Heights Schools and Safeway Bus Company. Each driver is required to maintain a Commercial Driver's License and receives training in driving skills, student management, and emergency procedures.

### **CHANGES IN BUSSING**

If an address changes during the school year, because of a move or new daycare, notify the Early Learning Office. We will submit a change request to the transportation department. *Bus drivers are not able to change routes without notice from our office.* Please allow 7-10 business days for a new schedule. Changes requested in August and September may take longer.

### **'MY STOP' APP FOR ISD 199 BUS RIDERS**

This app shows parents & daycare providers the location of their child's bus in real time. Late bus alerts let families know when buses are running behind.

## **SAFETY**

### **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

Each year we ask parents/guardians to provide emergency information if we must contact someone in an emergency or illness.

Please be sure the numbers you give us allow us to reach a person, not an answering machine or voicemail.

***For the safety of your child, emergency information MUST be kept up to date.***

### **MANDATED REPORTERS**

Preschool and district staff are mandated to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

### **FIRE, TORNADO, AND LOCK DOWN DRILLS**

Children and staff will participate in the fire, tornado, and lockdown drills required by the state. Evacuation and safety information is posted in each room. Information is always shared at a developmentally appropriate level and teachers use calm leadership as they help prepare children ahead of time so they know what to expect.

## SCHOOL CLOSING INFORMATION

When school is closed due to temperatures or dangerous wind chill, every attempt will be made to make and communicate the decision by 6:30 PM the night before. When school is closed due to snow and hazardous road conditions, every attempt will be made to make and communicate the decision by 5:30 AM the morning of the cancellation.

→ *If schools have a late start, **ALL preschool classes are canceled for the day.***

On days when winter weather conditions are extremely bad – or getting worse as the day progresses-- parents may choose to keep their preschool child at home or pick them up early, even if the district does not close school. Please notify the teacher of your decision.

Any time there is a school closure or delay, the district will place an outbound call to families. Make sure your contact information is updated in Infinite Campus. Families can also find information about school closings on:

- district website: [www.isd199.org](http://www.isd199.org)
- district information hotline: 651-306-7875
- district social media accounts: [www.facebook.com/isd199](http://www.facebook.com/isd199) & [www.twitter.com/isd199/https://www.facebook.com/ighpreschool](https://www.facebook.com/ighpreschool)
- local radio and TV news affiliates, including WCCO Radio – 830 AM, WCCO Channel 4, KSTP Channel 5 and 45, KMSP Channel 9, and KARE Channel 11

## HEALTH

### HEALTH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

School health services join the efforts of parents, guardians, and the community to protect and maintain the health of school children. Facilities are provided in each school for first aid and the immediate care of a child who is ill. Parents'/guardians' telephone numbers or alternate numbers are called if the student should not remain in school. **Please inform the school if phone numbers change during the year or update your information in Infinite Campus.**

#### Students may not be in school with:

1. Communicable diseases, such as Covid 19, strep throat, chicken pox, etc.
2. Temperature over 100° orally should not return to school until they have been **fever-free for 24 hours** without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
3. Pink eye with thick white or yellow drainage and/or eye pain.
4. Rash or open sores that may be disease-related or the cause is unknown
5. Vomiting, diarrhea, or severe abdominal pain. Students should not return to preschool until they have been **free of symptoms for 24 hours.**
6. New cough, or worsening cough or shortness of breath.
7. Injury that needs medical care.

A child should remain out of school until his or her temperature has been below 100° for 24 hours **without medication** (such as Tylenol). An elevated temperature indicates that the child's body is working to eliminate the reason for the elevated temperature; the child may still be contagious to other children. If you have been to your physician or clinic for a strep test, please ask when the child may return to school. A child

should be on medication (oral antibiotics or eye drops for eye infection) for 24 hours before returning to school.

When a student is ill or injured, health office personnel will:

1. Call the parent or guardian as listed on the emergency card and ask him or her to arrange transportation and care for the student.
2. If a parent or guardian is not available, the alternate person(s) designated on the emergency card will be called to provide transportation and care for the student until the parent can be contacted.
3. No student will be allowed to walk home or be taken home without the permission of an adult who is responsible for the student.
4. If an injury or illness requires any restrictions or adaptations at school, please have the physician write instructions to be followed at school.

In an extreme emergency, an ambulance will be called and your child will be taken to the nearest hospital. (This will be billed to the parent or guardian).

### **HEALTH CONDITIONS**

If your child has a health condition that needs to be monitored in school, a health action plan must be completed by your child's primary health care provider and a copy given to the teacher or school office.

Be sure health concerns are listed on your child's emergency form and speak with your child's teacher. This includes any allergies.

### **MEDICATIONS**

Whenever possible, the parent or guardian should make arrangements to administer medications at home. District policy regarding dispensing medication must be followed.

- If medication is needed during school hours, the school must have written parent/guardian permission and written physician orders on the Procedure for Dispensing Medicine before school staff can give medication.
- Medication must be in the original prescription bottle.
- Medication must be accompanied by specific instructions about when and how it should be given.
- This requirement includes over the counter medications and sunscreen.

### **INSURANCE**

The School District does not carry accident or health insurance for students. Parents/guardians are responsible for insurance and health coverage for their children, including transportation for medical care in the event of an emergency.

### **IMMUNIZATIONS**

Every child attending IGH Little Spartans Community Preschool must have an immunization record that is compliant with [Minnesota's School Immunization Law](#). This record must be turned in to the Early Learning office before the first day of school. Immunization Records can be dropped off, Faxed to 651-306-7521 OR Emailed [Preschool@isd199.org](mailto:Preschool@isd199.org). Students who have not complied with this rule will be excluded from preschool until the required immunizations are received.

## **CLASSROOM ROUTINES**

## **BACKPACKS**

Each child should have a regular sized backpack *labeled with their name*. This will help keep his/her belongings in one place and provide a safe way for the school to send important communications, artwork, and newsletters home with your child. Please check the backpack often for messages.

## **DRESSING FOR PRESCHOOL**

Our motto is "Dress for Mess". Children should be comfortably dressed for play. Because children work with paint and other messy materials, they should wear clothes that can be laundered easily. Children enjoy themselves more if they can experiment and play without fear of soiling their clothes.

Tennis shoes with rubber soles are preferred for their comfort and safety, as well as use on the gym floors. We recommend you do not send your child in open-toed sandals. Flip-flops are not allowed. Accidents do happen, so we ask that you send a complete change of clothing to keep in your child's backpack or cubby. (Label each item.)

## **FREE PLAY**

Play is a crucial part of a child's development. Free play, also known as "child-led learning" or "unstructured play," allows children to explore their environment, express their emotions, and build their vocabulary. During free play, children choose activities that interest them, without any specific learning goals imposed by adults. This type of play is vital for their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth, as well as for nurturing their imagination and creativity.

Here's why child-led, play-based learning is so important for a child's development:

- Encourages brain development and creativity
- Helps children learn and practice self-regulation
- Improves problem-solving skills
- Develops physical abilities
- Enhances social and communication skills
- Boosts language development
- Fosters independence

Although free play is directed by the children, teachers play a key role by setting up play areas, choosing appropriate toys and props, and asking open-ended questions to deepen the children's understanding of their activities. Free play happens daily, both indoors and outdoors. If you have any questions about the learning happening through play, please ask the teacher!

## **OUTDOOR RECESS**

Outdoor play is an important part of your child's day and total health. We are committed to providing outdoor activities as weather permits. Please dress your children appropriately for the weather. Teachers will provide more information on their outdoor routine.

During winter, children need boots, snowpants, a warm jacket, hat, and mittens (all labeled with their name). If you need help finding winter clothing, we have some extras and may have donations that can be shared. Ask your teacher or the Early Learning Social Worker at 651-306-7506.

*If you have preschool-size winter clothing that your family has outgrown, we welcome donations!*

## **SCHOOL LUNCH AND BREAKFAST**

The State of Minnesota and ISD 199 provide free breakfast and free lunch for preschool classes at Hilltop, Pine Bend, and Salem Hills. Students arriving in the morning will have the option of eating breakfast. Children who attend an afternoon or all day class will have the option to order a school lunch, or bring a

lunch from home. Students eating a school meal will be offered an entrée, fruits, vegetables, and milk daily. There is a fee for milk that is purchased separately.

### **FOOD ALLERGIES AND PREFERENCES**

If your child cannot eat a certain food for health reasons, please provide a written notice from your physician and discuss this issue with your child's teacher. If they are eating school lunch, food substitutes will be provided. Preschool staff will work with you to ensure other snacks are safe.

If your child does not eat a certain food for religious or cultural reasons, let the teacher know, or notify the Early Learning Office. A doctor's signature is not needed when foods are not eaten for religious reasons. A substitute food is not required to be provided, but we will work with you.

### **SNACKS AND BIRTHDAY TREATS**

All 3-year-old classes, and most 4's classes have snack time. If your child's class has snack time, parents are asked to provide them. Your child's teacher will provide ideas for snack donations. Please do not bring cookies and other sugary snacks. State law prohibits serving any food that is prepared at home. All food must be *commercially prepared* and brought to school in unopened packages.

All of our classrooms are "nut-free". *Any food containing or processed with nuts is prohibited.* A specific nut-free snack list can be provided by your child's teacher.

We ask that you support our nutrition initiative by providing healthy foods or non-food treats at birthdays. Please ask your child's teacher for a list of fun and healthy celebration ideas if you wish to bring in something for your child's birthday.

### **TOILETING**

***Children attending preschool must be able to independently use the bathroom without the use of a pull-up or diaper.*** Children with an IEP or medical condition may be exempt from this requirement.

Wearing clothes that are easy for the child to pull up and down helps them to be more successful. Keep an extra set of clothing in your child's backpack (pants, underwear, socks) in case of an unexpected accident.

## **STAY CONNECTED**

Families are respected and celebrated in IGH Preschool and we recognize your role as your child's first and most important teacher. Family involvement and connection with school is an important part of what makes a program strong and children successful. Preschool Connections:

- **Early Learning Website** <https://earlylearning.isd199.org/>: On the home page you will find contact information, quick links to schedule screenings and pay invoices, and an early learning calendar.
- **Teacher newsletters** will be sent throughout the year.
- **Monthly newsletter** from the Director of Early Learning
- **FACEBOOK** - Find us on FACEBOOK: IGH Early Learning.
- **Early Learning Advisory Council** - Consider joining the Early Learning Advisory Council or volunteering to help with the fundraiser and/or events

### **PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES**

The opportunity for open communication is an important ingredient of meaningful home-school relationships. Two-way communication is essential, and one opportunity for such communication is during

parent/teacher conferences. If you are unable to get to the school, we can also connect by phone or with Zoom.

Conferences with families are scheduled three times a year:

- Family Connections (Meet & Greet) - September 2-4
- Fall Conferences - October 13-15
- Winter Conferences - March 4-6

Preschool progress Reports will be sent home during winter conferences and at the end of the school year.

### **EARLY LEARNING ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) supports all ISD 199 early childhood programs. Members get the latest program updates and make recommendations that guide early learning decision making and program development.

The group advocates for early education in the community, at the legislature and with other families. Each fall, ELAC holds a fundraiser to support community events such as the IGH Community Baby Shower (Saturday, Oct 4 10am-11:30am), and to help fund staff professional development and the purchase of supplemental learning materials for students.

Meetings are held once a month at the Early Learning Center on the third Wednesday of the month, 6-7:30 pm. Child care is provided. You are welcome to come as a member or visitor.

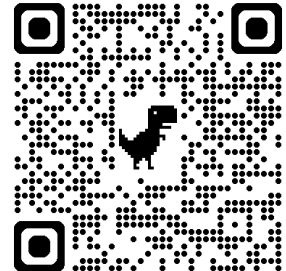
#### **For more information on the Advisory Council:**

[www.ighEarlyLearning.org](http://www.ighEarlyLearning.org) > Advisory Council      Email: [invergroveelac@gmail.com](mailto:invergroveelac@gmail.com)

Facebook: IGH Early Learning Advisory Council

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION (ECFE)**

We welcome preschool families to join one of our amazing ECFE classes, for parents, or grandparents, and children from birth up to kindergarten. Scan the QR code for more information. ECFE teachers and Parent Educators are also available to answer your questions about child development and parenting.



**HAVE A GREAT PRESCHOOL YEAR!**  
**We Wish You Well**