COMET KIDS PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK

Program Policies and Procedures

2025 - 2026

Beautiful Beginnings
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Preschool Policies and Procedures

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Comet Kids Preschool Program Policies and Procedures

I. WELCOME TO COMET KIDS PRESCHOOL QPPS 10.1

The program's goal is to provide a high quality preschool program meeting each child's needs, including children with disabilities and those from a diverse background. The preschool provides a rich learning environment that encourages children's natural curiosity and supports them to take risks that lead to new skill development. It is a setting where children feel safe, respected, and cared for. This is an opportunity for all preschool children to take part in planned, active learning experiences to build their readiness skills. The preschool program has adopted and meets the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, administered by the Iowa Department of Education. The Iowa Early Learning Standards are used to guide expectations for the children and instructional practices.

II. MISSION, VISION, PHILOSOPHY, AND GOALS QPPS 10.1

Mission:

The Mission of the North Polk Community School District is Learning for ALL by Learning from ALL.

Vision:

The vision of the North Polk Community School District is for all learners to become Quality Producers, Knowledgeable People, Problem Solvers, Effective Communicators, and Collaborative Workers.

Comet Kids Preschool Philosophy:

Preschool serves as the first bridge between home and school. Play is the primary vehicle of learning for the young child. Play allows the child to experiment, explore, and manipulate his/her environment, while developing imagination, creativity and innovation. The Comet Kids Preschool provides young children with the opportunity to socialize with peers, build understanding of pre-academic concepts, and develop skills to maximize independence.

Young children construct knowledge based on their real-life experiences; they learn by doing. Children increase their own knowledge of the world through repeated interactions with people and materials. Our classrooms are designed to encourage children's active exploration with adults, other children, and materials.

Goals for Children:

- Children will be safe and healthy, both physically and emotionally.
- Children will be enthusiastic and engaged learners.
- Children will show competence in social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development skills.
- Children will have the opportunity to explore the arts, science & technology.
- Children will be engaged in learning about how people live in different ways, nearby and around the world.

Goals for Families:

- Families will feel welcome in the classroom and at school.
- Families will work with the school in a meaningful partnership as both families and teachers advocate for the children.

III. ENROLLMENT

Equal Educational Opportunity

It is the policy of the North Polk Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, national origin, creed, age, marital status, or disability in its educational programs, activities, or employment policies as required by TitleVI and VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, TitleIX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is also the policy of this district that the curriculum content and instructional materials utilized reflect the cultural and racial diversity present in the United States and the variety of careers, roles and lifestyles open to women as well as men in our society. One of the objectives of the total curriculum and teaching strategies is to reduce stereotyping and to eliminate bias on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, and disability. The curriculum should foster respect and appreciation for the cultural diversity found in our country and an awareness of the rights, duties, and responsibilities of each individual member of pluralistic society. Inquiries regarding compliance with TitleIX, TitleVI, or Section 504 may be directed to the Superintendent's Office, North Polk Community School, Alleman, Iowa 50007, 515-984-3400; to the Director of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, Des Moines, Iowa; or the Director of the Region VII Office of Civil Rights, Department of Education, Kansas City, Missouri.25

Eligibility

To be eligible for our 4-year-old preschool classes, children must be four years of age prior to September 15th of the current school year and be a resident of Iowa.

Children may be put on the preschool list for the upcoming year once registration opens online in February. Once preschool sessions are full, a waiting list is created. As openings arise, children are added to class lists in the order in which they appear on the waiting list.

Hours

Preschool Sessions:
AM 7:50-10:50
PM 11:50-2:45
Classes meet for three hours each day, ~~f~~our days per week. Children attend Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Students do not attend preschool on Wednesdays.
The 4 year old sessions at our community partners meet 7:50-10:50 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Students do not attend preschool on Wednesdays. but may be enrolled in daycare at the center on Wednesdays, as well as afternoons Monday through Friday, if families so desire.

Wednesdays are dedicated to meetings and home visits, collaboration time for the teaching staff and community agencies. Preschool staff members also meet with consultants from the Area Education Agency on a regular basis. All preschool sessions follow the North Polk district-wide school calendar unless parents are notified otherwise. One day per school year is designated for all preschool staff to attend a professional development specifically designed for early childhood educators.

General Information QPPS 5.1 10.4

Within six weeks after a child begins the program, health records that document the dates of service shall be submitted that show the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the schedule recommended and published by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The school nurses and/or community partner directors maintain these records.

A teaching staff-child ratio of at least 1:10 will be maintained at all times to encourage adult-child interactions and promote activity among children. The maximum class size for all four-year-old classes is 20 students, but may be adjusted according to the student needs within the classroom. The elementary principal will maintain a current list of available substitutes for both the teacher and teacher assistant. Should one of the teaching staff need to leave the classroom for more than a few moments, the teacher will call the elementary office to arrange for coverage in order to maintain the staff-child ratio. **QPPS 10.4**

Inclusion

The preschool program serves all children, including those with disabilities and unique learning needs. This includes children who have specific speech and communication needs as well. Modifications are made in the environment and staffing patterns in order to include children with special needs. The preschool staff works closely with the early childhood team assigned to our school district by the local Area Education Agency. Staff members consult with specific members of the AEA team, in collaboration with parents/families, in order to make appropriate referrals based upon identified needs of individual children. If further evaluation and/or services are deemed necessary, staff members work collaboratively with the AEA team and families to develop specific intervention plans. It is our belief that inclusion in our program will enrich the experience for teachers, students, other children and their families. The school facilities meet the Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility requirements. **QPPS 9.10**

IV. A CHILD'S DAY

Who Works In The Preschool QPPS 10.2

Program Administrator The elementary principal is designated as the program administrator supervising the preschool program. The principal meets all qualifications described in the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards.

Teacher A full-time teacher, licensed by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners and holding an early childhood endorsement, is assigned to each preschool classroom. Additionally, the preschool staff members serving in our elementary buildings also hold early childhood special education endorsements. **QPPS 6.3**

Teacher Assistant

A full time teacher assistant in the classroom carries out activities under the supervision of the teacher. The teacher assistant will have specialized training in early childhood education. **QPPS 6.4**

1:1 Associate

1:1 associates are hired based on the individual needs of students who receive special education services. They will have specialized training in meeting the needs of their student(s) as outlined within the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP)..

School Nurse

The preschool will have the assistance of the school nurse. The current nurse is employed full time, is a certified RN, and is recertified every three years. S/he maintains student health records by updating them

quarterly, and attends to the health needs of the students while they are at school. S/he is available for staff and parent consultation when necessary. **QPPS 10.10**

Support Staff

Heartland Area Education Agency (AEA) 11 staff provide resources and assistance to the teacher and classroom, upon request, to help all children be successful in the preschool setting. Such staff may include: early childhood consultant, speech and language pathologist, social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapist and others.

Daily Activities

A consistent daily schedule is planned to offer a balance of learning activities. Learning is both teacher-directed and child-initiated . Time dedicated to play is planned for every day at preschool. Listening is balanced with talking, large group activities with individual or small group time, indoor activities with outdoor activities, quiet play with more noisy, active play. Your child will have the opportunity to participate in activities including a variety from the following choices on a daily basis:

<table>
<tr><td>Large and Small Group Activities
Individual/Self-directed Play</td><td>Snack</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Learning Center Activities:
Art, Discovery, Dramatic Play, Sensory Play, Library & Writing, Block Play, Science & Cooking, Math & Manipulatives, Toys & Games</td><td>Story Time</td></tr>
<tr><td>Outdoor Activities</td></tr>
</table>

Lesson plans for each week are posted in the classroom showing how these activities are incorporated into the daily schedule. Periodic newsletters and/or other communications will be sent home to families in children's backpacks and/or electronically.

Curriculum QPPS 2.1 - 2.3

Curriculum is a framework for learning opportunities and experiences. It is a process by which learners obtain knowledge and understanding, while developing life skills. Our preschool curriculum is designed to help children gain readiness skills for Kindergarten while still allowing for flexibility, in order to follow children's interests and to make learning fun and exciting, by appealing to their intrinsic curiosity and motivation.

It is the policy of this district that the curriculum content and instructional materials utilized reflect the cultural and racial diversity present in the United States and the variety of careers, roles, and lifestyles open to women as well as men in our society. One of the objectives of the total curriculum and teaching strategies is to reduce stereotyping and to eliminate bias on the basis of sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, and physical ability. The curriculum fosters respect and appreciation for the cultural diversity found in our country and an awareness of the rights, duties, and responsibilities of each individual as a member of a multicultural, nonsexist society. **QPPS 1.7**

The preschool program uses The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, a research and evidence-based comprehensive curriculum designed for 3, 4 and 5 year olds. It addresses all areas of early learning: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, literacy, mathematics and language. It provides children an

opportunity to learn in a variety of ways - through play, problem-solving, movement, art, music, drawing and writing, math and science, listening, and storytelling. Suggestions for ongoing changes to the environment, modifications and adaptations are an integral part of the curriculum. Children participate in projects based upon topics and themes that are relevant and captivating to the children inhabiting each classroom. Therefore, while each classroom covers all of the Essential Standards adopted by the district early childhood team, each classroom can also adapt to the individual strengths and needs represented in the students there. **QPPS 2.1, 2.2**

The preschool program also utilizes more than one tool for early literacy instruction. The EAK (Enhancing Alphabet Knowledge) Instructional Cycle is a curriculum that exposes students to a different letter every day throughout several different rotations of the alphabet. This approach models how each letter symbol is formed, the sound that it represents and examples of how it appears in print. Additionally, each preschool room uses "Phonemic Awareness: The Skills They Need to Help Them Succeed!" by Michael Heggerty. This curricular framework provides children daily opportunities to practice early literacy skills such as listening, blending, segmenting, rhyming, alliteration and ending sounds.

Child Assessment QPPS 4.1, 4.2

Guiding principles:

It is the school district's belief that assessment of young children should be purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and take place in the natural setting by familiar adults. The results are used to guide instruction and for planning appropriate experiences for the children. Assessment will never be used to label children, but instead to guide the next steps of their instruction and learning. A family's culture and a child's experiences outside the school setting are also recognized as being an important piece of the child's growth and development. All results will be placed in each child's file and kept confidential.

Children are assessed in the following ways:

- ***Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment*** aligns with the Iowa Early Learning Standards. It records student progress in all developmental areas at the beginning, middle, and end of the year.
- Observational data provides an ongoing anecdotal record of each child's progress during daily activities.
- The ***Get Ready to Read*** early literacy screener is also administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the year to assess skills associated with literacy and readiness for reading.
- Child portfolios are organized by the teaching staff and include assessments, observational data, and child work samples collected on an on-going basis in all classrooms.
- Families are asked to contribute information about their child's progress. Young children often show different skills in different settings. Working together, the teaching staff and families can gather a complete picture of a child's growth and development.

The information from the above is used in the following ways:

- To collect information about children's needs, interests, and abilities in order to plan developmentally appropriate experiences for them;
- To place children in fluid groupings for effective small group work that is matched to their current skill levels and to foster growth
- To provide information to parents about their children's developmental milestones;
- To indicate possible areas that require additional assessment.

QPPS 7.3, 7.5
Assessment information will be shared formally with families during Parent Teacher Conferences in the fall and spring. Additionally, progress reports will be sent home after each checkpoint period. Each 12-week period constitutes a trimester of the school year, so families can expect one written report for each of the fall, winter and spring trimesters. The preschool teachers will also communicate periodically regarding children's activities. Informal conferences are always welcome and can be requested at any time.

If the teacher feels that there is a possible issue related to a developmental delay or other special need, s/he will communicate this to the family during a conference, or other communication, sharing documentation of the concern. The child's performance in the classroom will usually be documented through pertinent observations entered into Teaching Strategies GOLD (the assessment tool created in companion with The Creative Curriculum), or some other assessment data utilized to elicit specifically targeted data. Suggestions for next steps may include the following, with the knowledge and consent of the parents:

- The teacher requests assistance from the Area Education Agency (AEA) team in the form of an early intervention process. This team will engage in problem identification, plan interventions, provide support, and make outside resources available to those individuals requesting assistance. The AEA team is available and functional for all students and teachers in the building.

The preschool teacher will assist in arranging for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment when indicated. **QPPS 7.4**

If a child is determined to need special accommodations, those accommodations are included in the materials, environment, lesson plans and other added supports for that child. Examples include sign language and visuals for children with hearing impairments or language delays, and behavior plans for children whose behavior does not respond to the typical management strategies used by teaching staff in the classroom.

Program Assessment
Comet Kids Preschool implements the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards. Administrators, families, staff, and other routinely participating adults will be involved annually in a program evaluation that measures progress toward the program's goals and objectives. The annual evaluation process is facilitated by the state in the form of an electronic desk audit. The audit gathers evidence on specific areas of program functioning selected by the state each year, including policies and procedures, program quality, children's progress and learning, family involvement and satisfaction, and community awareness and satisfaction. The program uses this information to plan professional development and program quality-improvement activities as well as to improve operations and policies.

Supervision Policy QPPS 9.2
Before children arrive at school, preschool staff will complete the following daily safety checklist indoors and outdoors:

- All safety plugs and electric outlets covered; heat/AC, water temperature, and toilets, etc. in working order.
- All cleaning supplies/poisons out of children reach, and are stored properly.
- Equipment and materials checked for cleanliness/broken parts, etc. including the playground.
- Supplies checked - first aid kit, latex gloves, soap, paper towels, etc.

- Daily monitoring of the environment - spills, malfunctions, etc. Other serious problems are reported to the head custodian.
- Upon arrival, each child is observed by the teacher for signs of illness or injury that could affect the child's ability to participate in the daily activities. The wellness of every individual, as a whole child, is a priority every day.

No child will be left unsupervised while attending preschool. Staff will supervise primarily by sight. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible, as long as teachers check every two to three minutes on children who are out-of-sight (e.g. those who can use the toilet independently, who are in the library area, etc.)

Child Guidance and Discipline (QPPS 1.11)

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

Challenging Behavior **(QPPS 1.2, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10)**

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

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

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

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

Permissible Methods of Discipline:
For acts of aggression and fighting (biting, scratching, hitting), staff will set appropriate expectations for children and guide them in solving problems. This positive guidance will be the usual technique for managing children with challenging behaviors rather than punishing them for having problems they have not yet learned to solve. In addition, staff may: (1) Separate the children involved; (2) Immediately comfort the individual who was injured; (3) Care for any injury suffered by the victim involved in the incident.; (4) Review the adequacy of the teaching staff supervision, appropriateness of program activities, and administer corrective action in an effort to prevent a recurrence.

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

1. harsh or abusive tone of voice with the children, making threats or derogatory remarks.
2. physical punishment, including spanking, hitting, shaking, or grabbing.
3. any punishment that would humiliate, frighten, or subject a child to neglect.
4. withhold, or threaten to withhold, food as a form of discipline.

Water activities QPPS 5.9, 9.15

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

Snacks/Foods and Nutrition (QPPS 5.12- 5.21)

Attitudes about food develop early in life. The food children eat affects their well being, their physical growth, their ability to learn, and their overall behavior. We have an opportunity to help children learn about foods, to enjoy a variety of foods from their own culture and others, and to help them begin to appreciate that their bodies need to be strong, flexible, and healthy. Eating moderately, eating a variety of foods, and eating in a relaxed atmosphere are healthy habits for young children to form.

Children attending each session of preschool are served a snack at a regularly scheduled time. Two food groups will be represented at each snack time as outlined in USDA guidelines. A written snack menu is posted in the classroom and made available to families. All menus are available for review by the school nutrition consultant. The preschool serves a wide variety of nutritional snacks, and encourages children to expand their tastes by at least trying a portion of the food offered, but children are never forced to eat.

All food is prepared, served, and stored in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines. Clean, sanitary drinking water is made available to children throughout the day. Staff discards any foods with expiration dates that have expired. Foods requiring refrigeration will be kept cold until served.

For each child with special health care needs, food allergies, or special nutrition needs, the child's health care provider should provide the program with an individualized care plan prepared in consultation with family members and a specialist involved in the child's care. Children with food allergies shall be protected from contact with the problem food. With family consent, the program posts information about the child's allergies in the food preparation area, and in areas of the facility the child uses, to serve as a visual reminder to all adults who interact with the child during the day. Program staff will keep a daily record documenting the type and quantity of food a child consumes when any child with a disability has special feeding needs, and provide parents with that information.

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

School district staff will not withhold food or beverages as a punishment, nor will teaching staff ever threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline.

Outside Play and Learning QPPS 5.5, 5.6 9.5-9.7

There are daily opportunities for outdoor play as the weather permits and provided the air quality and environmental safety conditions do not pose a threat. This allows children the opportunity to develop their large muscle skills, get exercise, and be active. The Child Care Weather Watch guidelines produced by Healthy Child Care Iowa are used to determine if the wind chill factor or heat index is safe for outdoor play. Some days we may just get out for a few moments of fresh air, but if the weather makes it possible, we will almost always try.

In cases of inclement weather, children are given the opportunity to use indoor equipment for similar activities inside and are supervised at the same level as with outdoor equipment. For example, tumbling mats may be offered for rolling across the mat or low balance beams for walking across.

In order to make sure that your child can play comfortably outside, it is important to dress him/her according to the weather. When it is cold outside a warm coat, mittens or gloves and a hat or hood are needed. When snow is present, or whenever temperatures are around freezing or below, snow pants and boots really help keep children warm and dry for a comfortable outdoor experience. For the warmer days dressing your child lightly is just as important. For those in-between days dressing your child in layers is a practical idea. It is highly encouraged that parents dress their children in clothing that they have practiced putting on and off by themselves. Teachers are certainly available to help, but such self-help skills make it more possible for children to develop a healthy sense of confidence in being able to take care of their own needs. This also aids the functioning of the class as a whole, because not all of the children will have to wait on adult assistance to get ready for outdoor play.

There are areas on the playground for children to be in the shade and still be active. Hats or other clothing are encouraged to wear as another protection from the sun. If you would like to have your child wear sunscreen for outdoor play, please apply it before they arrive at preschool for the day.

Staff check the playground daily for potential hazards as they are outdoors interacting in the playground environment with the children. The National Program for Playground Safety Suggested General

Maintenance Checklist is used as a guide for playground safety when changes are being made to playground design/equipment and/or whenever safety issues arise or are being otherwise considered.

Clothing

Your child will be learning through creative, active play that can sometimes be messy. Your child should wear comfortable, washable clothing as well as rubber-soled and closed-toe shoes to school. The use of paint smocks or shirts during art projects will be encouraged; however, spills or stains may still occur. Clothing should be free of words, graphics, or pictures that are profane, immoral, illegal, or disruptive in nature. All families are asked to provide an extra set of clothing for their child in case of a toileting "accident" or messy play. Please clearly label the clothing with your child's name to reduce the possibility of mistakes and replenish this set of clothes as the need arises. It is also helpful if the extra set of clothing is updated according to the weather as the seasons change.

Toilet Learning (QPPS 5.7)

It is highly recommended, but not required, for children who attend preschool to be toilet-trained, or at least be currently participating in this learning process. We realize that children this age may still be working toward mastery of this skill and, even if they are consistently using the toilet, there may be "accidents". Regardless of where children currently are in this process, provisions will be made to help all children be able to comfortably participate throughout their preschool day in clean and dry, comfortable clothing. More specific, specialized accommodations will also be made for children who have medical documentation of a special need or an Individualized Education Plan.

Toilet learning is an important time in a child's development. For children who are still working to accomplish this developmental milestone, the following conditions exist:

1. Diapering will only be done in the designated diaper area, i.e., on a mat that can be sanitized after each use. Food handling will not be permitted in this diapering area. Families will need to provide disposable diapers and wipes (unless there are extenuating circumstances).
2. Staff will follow all diapering guidelines set forth in the Iowa Quality Preschool Programs Standards: Standard 5, Criteria 7:
    - Staff check children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or contain feces at least every 2 hours. Diapers are changed when wet or soiled.
    - Staff change children's diapers or soiled underwear in the designated changing areas and not elsewhere in the facility.
    - At all times, caregivers have a hand on the child if being changed on an elevated surface.
    - Surfaces used for changing and on which changing materials are placed are not used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects, and especially not for any object involved with food or feeding.
    - Containers that hold soiled diapers and diapering materials have a lid that opens and closes tightly using a hands-free device (e.g., a step can). Containers are kept closed and are inaccessible to children. The container will be clearly labeled to show its intended use.
    - Diapering, gloving and washing posters will be posted in the changing area showing procedures through the use of visuals and words. These procedures are reviewed periodically by the teaching staff that change diapers.
3. Potty chairs will not be used due to the risk of spreading infectious disease.

Objects From Home

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

Weapon Policy

No student shall carry, have in his or her possession, store, keep, leave, place or put into the possession of another student, any real weapon or a look-alike weapon on any school premises, in any school vehicle or any vehicle used by the school or for school purposes, in any school building or other buildings or premises used for school functions, whether or not any person is endangered by such actions. "Look-alike weapon" means any item that resembles or appears to be a weapon. *A zero tolerance policy on dangerous weapons (real or toy) is in effect; i.e., guns, squirt guns, water rifles or pistols, slingshots, toy guns, toy grenades, knives and other similar items, etc. Violation may result in a student suspension/expulsion.*

Classroom Animals and Pets (QPPS 5.26)

No live animals are to be inside the North Polk Community School buildings or classrooms at any time, except in the case of a trained support animal who has gone through the process of becoming approved by the district.

If you, as a parent or legal guardian, want to bring your family pet to share with your child's classroom you are welcome. However, all animals must remain outside the school buildings during the visit. The preschool teacher ensures that the animal does not create an unsafe or unsanitary condition. The animal would appear to be in good health and have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animal is fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) and suitable for contact with children. The teacher would ensure staff and children practice good hygiene and hand washing when coming into contact with the animal and after coming into contact with the animal. Teaching staff supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior when in close proximity to animals.

Any children allergic to the pet will not be exposed to the animal. Reptiles are not allowed because of the risk for salmonella. The classroom teacher is responsible for checking that requirements have been met.

Birthdays QPPS 5.13

Birthdays are an important and significant event in the life of a child. They afford the opportunity for children to be given special recognition. Those who have summer birthdays are welcome to choose a school day to celebrate with their class, or many classrooms observe "half birthdays". Invitations to parties outside of school that do not include the entire class will not be distributed at school.

V. COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES (QPPS 1.1, 7.5)

The program will promote communication between families and staff by using printed or electronic notes/newsletters as well as informal conversations or e-mail. Families are encouraged to send written

communication with important information so all the staff who work with the child can share the parent's communication. Staff will use ongoing communication to inform families about the child's experiences, accomplishments, behavior, and other issues that affect the child's development and well-being. Parents are encouraged to maintain regular, on-going, two-way communication with the teaching staff in a manner that best meets their needs - email, in person, notes, or phone calls.

Open Door Policy

Parents and legal guardians are always welcome to visit the preschool classroom. As a safety feature, all parents and visitors will check in at the elementary school office. Visitors are asked to please use discretion with regard to bringing babies and toddlers to school as young children may disrupt class sessions. Photo identification will be required for any unknown visitor to the classroom and all volunteers will need to follow the district process to become an approved volunteer, as found on the district website. This pertains to parents attending field trips as well.

Arrival and Departure of Children (QPPS 10.11)

All motor vehicle transportation provided by parents, legal guardians or others designated by parents or legal guardians will include the use of age-appropriate, and size-appropriate seat restraints.

When bringing your child to school, if you would like to walk your child up to the building, you must park your car in the parking lot and turn off the engine before walking to the building. Please hold your child's hand while in the parking areas to decrease the possibility of an accident. No child will be permitted to leave the building without an authorized adult present who makes contact with the teacher.

Other than parents or legal guardians, only persons with prior written authorization (Parent Consent Form) will be allowed to pick up a child from the school. Anyone who is unfamiliar to teaching staff, including authorized individuals, will be asked to present photo identification before a child is released to them. If your child's pick up plan will be different for the day, it is helpful to let your child's teacher and the school office know, so that we will be aware of the change ahead of time.

If your child rides the school bus to school, staff members will be available to greet the children and help supervise their arrival into the building. At dismissal, staff members will accompany each student to the bus and assist them as necessary.

When all children have arrived, teaching staff will record attendance for the day. If your child arrives after the start time for the session, please remember to check your child in with the office. Throughout the day, each time children transition from one location to another, i.e. classroom to outdoor, the teacher will be responsible for counting the number of children, whenever leaving one area and when arriving at another to confirm the safe whereabouts of every child at all times.

Transportation

Parents of students utilizing school transportation services must indicate the pick up and drop off address, the name of the responsible person at that address, and emergency contact information for all parties involved. Parents or legal guardians are asked to keep their information current by reporting changes to the preschool teacher and elementary school secretary. All information will be updated each year as a part of registration.

For children who have special needs for transportation, the district will use a plan based on a functional assessment of the child's needs related to transportation that is filled out by the child's physician and/or IEP team. This plan will address special equipment, staffing and care in the vehicle during transport. Any accommodations indicated in the child's Individualized Educational Plan will be implemented as described.

Field Trips

An important learning opportunity can take place in the form of a field trip that is relevant and reinforces what has been taught in the classroom. The North Polk school buses or other school district vehicles are used for these field trips. Parents will be informed in written form well in advance of each field trip utilizing school transportation. A parent or guardian must sign a form at the beginning of the school year giving permission for their child to attend field trips. Adult family members are asked to volunteer to go on these trips to provide increased supervision and adult/child ratios. Parents will be given information about the location and times of departure and return for each specific trip in advance. Each child will be assigned to an adult for every part of the trip. Before every trip, the teaching staff will instruct children and any other staff using the bus about bus safety and other safety precautions that will be taken to ensure safety away from the center.

During the field trip, all children will be encouraged to wear clothing that helps to identify the group they are with. A first aid kit and emergency contact information will be taken any time children leave school premises Children will be counted every 15 minutes while on a field trip or whenever moving from one location to another. Children may only use a public restroom if they are accompanied by a staff member or other approved adult volunteer. Children will never be left alone in a vehicle or unsupervised by an adult.

Attendance

Students who are enrolled for classes in the North Polk Schools are expected to be in school for the full session and are expected to be punctual in their arrival and departure. Students are not expected to be absent any more than is necessary for health reasons or appointments. Irregular attendance interferes with the progress of your child and others, as teachers find themselves taking class time to repeat information and make adjustments for those students who have been absent. Please call the elementary office with the reason for an absence no later than 7:50 AM for the morning session and by 11:40 PM for the afternoon session, if your child will not be present that day. For safety's sake, if a student is absent without notification, the school secretary/teaching staff will attempt to contact the family to verify the child's absence from school.

If your child is arriving late to school, please walk your child into the building and check him/her in with the office.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Staff follow an important code of ethics to guide their involvement with children and families. It is essential to protect the confidentiality of all information concerning children and their families. Maintaining a professional attitude includes being responsive to the needs of children and their families while balancing the need for confidentiality. Children are people who deserve respect. One way we demonstrate this respect is to refrain from talking about the children in their presence unless the child is

part of the conversation and to refrain from labeling a child negatively or positively. No information about any particular child shall be shared with another child's parent, or anyone else other than colleagues who may participate in helping to meet that child's needs. We continually strive to model such qualities as patience, tolerance, cooperation, acceptance, understanding of others, and enthusiasm for children as well as for other adults. All teaching staff will receive training on ethics and confidentiality as part of their orientation.

Children's Records

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

Parents or guardians will be asked to sign a release of information form should they, or the school, request information be shared with another agency. This form will state to whom the information is to be released, the reason or purpose for the release of information, when it expires, and ways the parents can withdraw permission if they choose to do so.

Grievance Policy QPPS 7.6

Open and honest communication between families and the preschool program is an essential component of a high quality early childhood program. We want you to be confident that your child is being well cared for and is having a quality experience. If there is ever a time you have a concern regarding your child, we encourage you to address your concern to your child's teacher. If additional help is needed, either party may ask for the assistance from the elementary principal.

If you have a concern regarding some aspect of the program or policy, please contact the elementary principal, who is the program administrator for the preschool. If you remain dissatisfied, you may contact the superintendent of North Polk Community Schools.

As part of the program assessment, in the spring of each year, a questionnaire is provided to each family to evaluate the program. This information helps to assess how the program is meeting the needs of families and children, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses.

VI. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT QPPS 7.1, 7.2

Comet Kids Preschool encourages families to be very involved in their child's education by observing their children during the day when possible and meeting with staff. Family members are welcome to visit at any time during class sessions. All volunteers who will be in the presence of children will need to complete the district process for becoming an approved volunteer.

Teachers and administrators use a variety of formal and informal ways to become acquainted with and learn from families about their family structure; their preferred means of child-rearing practices and communication; and information about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural

backgrounds, as they wish to share. Families are surveyed in enrollment paperwork regarding their family, beliefs, and preferences. At the beginning of the school year, home visits are conducted, as well as an opportunity for all families to become familiar with the classroom/building and ask any questions before the first day. Program staff communicate with families on a regular basis regarding children's activities and developmental milestones, to share care-giving issues, and to provide other information that affects the well-being of their children. Family-teacher conferences are held in both the fall and spring semesters, as well as when either party requests. At least one district-wide Family Night is held each year. The location rotates building sites.

Comet Kids Preschool values the time spent talking and interacting with families and developing strong, reciprocal relationships. As the teacher learns from the family regarding their child's interests, approaches to learning, and developmental needs, goals for your child's growth and development can be incorporated into ongoing classroom planning. Families are encouraged to share any concerns, preferences or questions with the preschool teacher or administration at any time.

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

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

1. Support your child's daily transition to school by sharing information about your child's interests and abilities, as well as a family photo to be kept in the child's classroom.
2. Keep the teacher informed of changes and events that might affect your child. This allows the teacher to be more responsive to your child's needs.
3. Check your child's backpack each day.
4. Read all the material sent home with your child or electronically.
5. Return all forms, questionnaires or other requested information promptly.
6. Attend Family-Teacher conferences in the fall and spring semesters.
7. Come to play/help in the classroom, if possible.
8. Participate in field trip activities.
9. Attend family event(s).
10. Take time to browse through posts of classroom photos.
11. Share some of your talents in your child's class through activities such as: reading or storytelling, cooking, art, music, sewing, crafts, hobbies, your profession, or artifacts from trips you have taken.
12. Share any of your cultural traditions, celebrations, or customs.
13. Help with classroom activities and special events. Helping takes many different forms such as donating materials, preparing materials at home, helping to organize forms or other things that have to be returned to school, running errands, photography, assisting with special days at school such as picture day or hearing & vision screenings, participating in PTA, etc.

It is the policy of the North Polk Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, creed, age, marital status, or physical disability in its education programs, activities, or employment policies as required by Title VI or VIII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, and the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The school district will, to the extent possible, provide full opportunities for meaningful participation of the families with children with limited English proficiency, families with children with disabilities, including providing information and school reports in an understandable and uniform format and, including alternative formats on request, and, to the extent possible, in a language families understand.

The school district believes that families should be supported in making decisions about services that their children may need. The teaching staff will provide information to families about available community resources and assist as requested in helping the family make connections.

Family/Teacher Conferences

The preschool program will have formal Family/Teacher conferences, like the rest of the elementary school - fall and spring. During these conferences, the teacher will share results of classroom assessments and samples of your child's work. Together you can make a plan to continue to encourage your child's growth and development.

Family Night

Family Night is an opportunity for you and your family to come to school to participate together in fun, as well as educational, activities. The location of this event is rotated between school buildings in order to allow families to experience the different settings of the Comet Preschool Program.

Transitions QPPS 7.9, 7.10

Home-school connections are crucial to the transition to kindergarten or any other program, such as special education. The child's family provides the consistency and continuity necessary for a young child to be successful. Making a change from one program to another can sometimes be difficult for a young child, whether the transition is within the same building or in another location. Teaching staff will partner with the family to make the transition for each child as smooth as possible. Program staff provide families with information about program options, connect with the next program's staff, share enrollment policies and procedures, and arrange for a classroom visit whenever possible.

VII. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Comet Kids Preschool is committed to promoting wellness and to safeguarding the health and safety of children and adults who participate in our program. In order to provide a safe and secure environment for every child and adult, the following guidelines are followed: Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, regulatory agencies, and pediatric authorities in the field.

Vision screenings are conducted yearly in conjunction with the local Lion's Club. Additionally, the AEA audiologist is available to conduct hearing tests for students undergoing special education evaluations or for individual concerns about a student's access based upon his/her ability to hear.

Health and Immunization Certificates QPPS 5.1

Within sixty days after a child begins the program, health records that document the dates of service shall be submitted that show the child is current for an annual physical and immunizations according to the schedule recommended and published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, except for immunizations for which parents are using religious exemption.

Health and Safety Records

Health and safety information collected from families will be maintained on file for each child in the school nurse's office. Files are kept current annually. The content of the file is confidential, but is immediately available to the following people: administrators or teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian for access to records, the child's parent or legal guardian, and regulatory authorities, upon request. **QPPS 10.10**

Child Health and Safety Records will include: **QPPS 5.1**

1. Results of health examination, showing up-to-date immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow-up required for abnormal results.
2. Current emergency contact information for each child that is updated annually, or as needed.
3. Instructions for any of the child's special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness (e.g., asthma, hearing or vision impairments, feeding needs, neuromuscular conditions, urinary or other ongoing health problems, seizures, diabetes).
4. Individual emergency care plans for children with known medical or developmental problems or other conditions that might require special care in an emergency (allergy, asthma, seizures, orthopedic or sensory problems, and other chronic conditions; conditions that require regular medication or technology support). **QPPS 10.14**
5. Supporting evidence for cases in which a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family's beliefs. Staff implement a plan to exclude the child promptly if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program.

General Health and Safety Guidelines

- All staff must be alert to the health of each child, known allergies, or special medical conditions.
- Under the supervision of the preschool teacher, all staff must be alert to the whereabouts of all children. Systems are in place for accounting for children at regular intervals, especially during periods of transition.
- All staff are to follow proper procedures for hand washing, using disinfectant, and following universal precautions to prevent infections.
- All staff are familiar with evacuation routes and procedures.
- All teaching staff complete "Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens" annually.
- At least one staff member who has successfully completed training in CPR and First Aid training is present in the program at all times. **QPPS 5.4**

Illness Policy and Exclusion of Sick Children QPPS 5.3

For the health and safety of all the children, it is mandatory that sick children not be brought to school. If your child has any of the following symptoms during the night, he or she will not be admitted the following morning for the safety of the other children.

- fever greater than 100 degrees F
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- pink eyes with drainage
- cough with congestion and excessive nasal discharge

The school's established policy for an ill child's return:

- Fever free for 24 hours
- Chicken pox: one week after onset (or when lesions are crusted)
- Strep: 24 hours after initial medication
- Vomiting/Diarrhea: 24 hours after last episode
- Conjunctivitis: 24 hours after initial medication or when without drainage

Upon arrival at school, each child is observed by teaching staff for signs of illness or injury that could affect the child's ability to participate comfortably in the daily activities. Children will be excluded when a child is not able to participate comfortably; if the illness requires more care than staff are able to provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group; or if keeping the child at school poses an increased risk to the child or to other children or adults with whom the child will come in contact. The basic wellness of each child is a priority and staff members strive to help children stay comfortable by helping them change into clean, dry clothing when necessary or by making an effort to temporarily provide appropriate clothing for outdoor play when children come to school without the outer wear that is required by the weather.

When a child develops signs of an illness during their day at preschool, parents, legal guardians, or other persons authorized by the parent will be notified immediately to pick up the child. For this reason, please be sure that current, accurate phone numbers are available for you, your authorized emergency contact person(s) and your child's pediatrician. In the meantime, the child will be provided with a place to rest under the supervision of someone familiar with the child, until the parent, legal guardian or designated person arrives. If the child is suspected of having a contagious disease, then until she or he can be picked up, the child will be located where new individuals will not be exposed.

Medication Policies and Procedures QPPS 5.10

Policy: The school will administer medication to children with written approval of the parent and an order from a health provider for a specific child. Because administration of medication in the school is a safety hazard, medication administration will be limited to situations where an agreement to give medicine outside preschool hours cannot be made. Whenever possible, the first dose of medication should be given at home to see if the child has any type of reaction.

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

health professional on the practice of the five right practices of medication administration: (1) verifying that the right child receives the (2) right medication (3) in the right dose (4) at the right time (5) by the right method with documentation of each "right" each time the medication is given. Medication errors will be controlled by checking and recording these five right practices each time medication is given. Should a medication error occur, the Regional Poison Control Center and the child's parents will be contacted immediately. The incident will be documented in the child's record at the school.

For prescription medications, parents or legal guardians will provide the school with the medication in the original, child-resistant container that is labeled by a pharmacist with the child's name, the name and strength of the medication; the date the prescription was filled; the name of the health care provider who wrote the prescription; the medication's expiration date; and administration, storage, and disposal instructions.

For over-the-counter medications, parents or legal guardians will provide the medication in a child-resistant container. The medication will be labeled with the child's first and last names; specific, legible instructions for administration and storage supplied by the manufacturer; and the name of the health care provider who recommended the medication for the child.

Instructions for the dose, time, method to be used, and duration of administration will be provided to the teaching staff in writing (by a signed note or a prescription label) or dictated over the telephone by a physician or other person legally authorized to prescribe medication. Medications will be kept at the temperature recommended for that type of medication, in a sturdy, child-resistant container that is locked and prevents spillage.

Medication will not be used beyond the date of expiration on the container or beyond any expiration of the instructions provided by the physician or other person legally permitted to prescribe medication. Instructions which state that the medication may be used whenever needed will be renewed by the physician at least annually.

A medication log will be maintained by the school staff in the child's infinite campus account to record the instructions for giving the medication, consent obtained from the parent or legal guardian, amount, the time of administration, and the person who administered each dose of medication.

Cleaning and Sanitization QPPS 9.11

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

Toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion will be removed immediately and disinfected after they are cleaned with soap and water. This also applies to other surfaces in the classroom. Toys and surfaces will be disinfected using a non-toxic solution of one tablespoon household bleach to one quart of tap water made fresh daily, or with a commercial disinfectant that is safe for children's environments. To disinfect, the surfaces will be sprayed until glossy. The bleach solution will be left on for at least 2 minutes before it is wiped off with a clean paper towel, or it may be allowed to air dry. Machine washable cloth toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion must be laundered before another child's use. Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used. **QPPS 5.24**

Staff will be trained in cleaning techniques, proper use of protective barriers such as gloves, proper handling and disposal of contaminated materials, and information required by the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration about the use of any chemical agents.

Routine cleaning will be supervised by the preschool teacher and will follow the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table in Section III, page 47 of the QPPS manual. A checklist will be completed as indicated in the table.

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

Hand Washing Practices QPPS 5.8

Frequent hand washing is key to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Teachers teach children how to wash their hands effectively. Posters of children using proper hand washing procedures are placed by each sink. The program follows these practices regarding hand washing:

- Staff members and those children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene are taught hand-washing procedures and are periodically monitored.
- Hand washing is required of all staff, volunteers, and children, especially at times when there is a greater risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others. (See below)
- Staff assist children with hand washing as needed to successfully complete the task.

Children and adults wash their hands:

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

Adults also wash their hands

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

Proper hand-washing procedures are followed by adults and children and include

- using liquid soap and running water;
- rubbing hands vigorously for at least 10 seconds, including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, and under fingernails; rinsing well; drying hands with a

paper towel, or a dryer; and avoiding touching the faucet with just-washed hands (e.g., by using a paper towel to turn off water).

Except when handling blood or body fluids that might contain blood (when wearing gloves is required), wearing gloves is an optional supplement, but not a substitute, for hand washing in any situation listed above.

- Staff must wear gloves when contamination with blood may occur.
- Staff do not use hand-washing sinks for bathing children or removing smeared fecal material.

In situations where sinks must be used for both food preparation and other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food.

First Aid Kit QPPS 9.13

A first aid kit is located in each preschool classroom near the door. It is inaccessible to children, but readily available for adult use. It is fully equipped according to guidance from Healthy Child Care Iowa. Following each use of the first aid kit, the contents will be inspected and missing or used items replaced immediately. The first aid kit will be inspected monthly. A first aid kit is available in outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from the site.

Fire Safety QPPS 9.14

A fire extinguisher is installed near the preschool classroom with a tag indicating its annual service date. The fire alarm system is serviced annually. Smoke detectors, fire alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors are tested monthly. A written log of testing dates and battery changes is maintained and available upon request from Buildings and Grounds personnel.

Medical Emergencies and Notification of Accidents or Incidents QPPS 10.13

The North Polk Community School District has in place a "Crisis Flip Chart" that describes emergency situations and prescribed procedures to follow. Each classroom also has updated "quick sheets" to use as resources for the following procedures:

- Emergency Contacts
- Fire
- Evacuation
- Severe Weather
- Shelter-in-Place
- Classroom Lockdown
- Active Threat/Run-Hide-Fight
- Rally Point Map
- Reunification

These resources are kept near the phone and included in the first aid kit. The procedures will be reviewed by each staff member at the beginning of each school year and when changes are made to it.

In the event that your child receives a minor, non-life threatening injury during their time at preschool, the teacher will assess the situation and apply first aid as needed. Minor cuts and scrapes will be treated with soap and water and bumps will be treated by applying ice to the injured area. Any incident requiring

more than a bandage or a cold compress will result in the child's family receiving some communication from the school nurse.

All staff will have immediate access to a device that allows them to summon help in an emergency. The telephone numbers of the Fire Department, Police Department and Poison Control will be posted by each phone with an outside line. Emergency contact information for each child and staff member will be kept readily available. The list of emergency telephone numbers, and copies of emergency contact information and authorization for emergency transport will be taken along anytime children leave the facility in the care of facility staff.

Emergency phone numbers will be updated at least annually.

Inclement Weather

Announcement of school closings due to weather or emergencies will be made via Infinite Campus, email,automated phone calls and/or texts. It will also be listed on major TV and radio stations. This announcement will be phoned in by 6:00 AM or earlier. In the event of a delay, AM preschool will not meet and PM preschool will meet at the regular time. If school is dismissed early due to weather, PM preschool may not meet.

Our school is linked to the tornado warning system. When word is received that a tornado is imminent, the students will be sent to a designated spot, the most practical safe place in the building. The school will practice safety by conducting 2 tornado drills, 2 fire drills, 1 lock down drill. and 1 bus safety per semester. Students and teachers are informed of the procedures for these emergency drills at the beginning of each school year.

Protection From Hazards and Environmental Health QPPS 9.16, 9.17

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

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

Smoke Free Facility QPPS 9.19

In compliance with the Iowa Smokefree Air Act of 2008, North Polk Community School buildings and grounds are smoke free. No smoking is allowed on the school grounds or within sight of any children.

Child Protection Policies QPPS 10.8, 10.16, 10.19

The health and well being of every child in our care is of the utmost importance and the protection of children is our responsibility. Any applicant for employment undergoes a background check before having direct interaction with children. Volunteers in the building or on field trips must have their government-issued ID run through RAPTOR prior to being in the presence of children. RAPTOR is an integrated school safety software that automatically screens visitors against sex offender data bases and

any other safety data bases customized by the school district. In addition to these safeguards, no person with a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect will come in contact with children in the program or have responsibility for children.

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

The school district does not tolerate employees physically, or sexually abusing or harassing students. Students who are physically or sexually abused or harassed by an employee should notify their parents, legal guardians, teacher, principal, or another employee. The Iowa Department of Education has established a two-step procedure for investigating allegations of physical or sexual abuse of students by employees. That procedure requires the school district to designate an independent investigator to look into the allegations. The school district has designated the Director of School Improvement at 685-3014. Alternate investigator to be named.

Substance Abuse

Persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not be permitted on the premises of the North Polk Community School. At no time will children be released to a person under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Volunteers QPPS 10.15, 10.17

Parents, friends, grandparents, and other adults are encouraged to take an active part in the educational process of the children. Please contact the teacher, the elementary principal, or our office secretary if you would like to be a school volunteer. We have a volunteer job description that defines the roles and responsibilities of a volunteer. For safety's sake, if a volunteer will be working with children, he/she will be expected to become an approved volunteer by running his/her government-issued ID through the RAPTOR system. In addition no person with a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect will come in contact with children in the program or have responsibility for children.

VIII. Staff QPPS 10.15 - 10.20

General Information

The North Polk School district has written personnel policies that define the roles and responsibilities, qualifications and specialized training required of staff and volunteer positions. The policies outline nondiscriminatory hiring procedures and policies for staff evaluation. Policies detail job descriptions for each position, including reporting relationships; salary scales with increments based on professional qualifications, length of employment, and performance evaluation; benefits; and resignation, termination, and grievance procedures. Personnel policies provide for incentives based on participation in professional development opportunities. The policies are provided to each employee upon hiring.

Hiring procedures include completion of the following checks: criminal-records check, free from history of substantiated child abuse or neglect check, education credentials, verification of age, completion of high school or GED, personal references and a current health assessment.

Confidential personnel files are maintained for staff members. These files include applications with record of experience, transcripts of education, health-assessment records, documentation of ongoing professional development, and results of performance evaluations.

Orientation QPPS 6.2

Employees must know their role and duties. New preschool teaching staff will be required to participate in an initial orientation that introduces them to fundamental aspects of the program operation including:

- Program philosophy, mission, and goals.
- Expectations for ethical conduct.
- Accepted guidance and classroom management techniques.
- Daily activities and routines of the program.
- Program curriculum.
- Child abuse and reporting procedures.
- Program policies and procedures.
- Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards and Criteria.
- Regulatory requirements.
- Individual needs of children they will be teaching or caring for.

Follow-up training throughout the year expands on these topics..

The employee's immediate supervisor should provide the new employee with a review of the employee's responsibilities and duties. The superintendent, or designated Human Resources personnel, will explain payroll procedures, employee benefit programs and accompanying forms to the employee. Regular employees ineligible for the school district's group health plan will be given information regarding where they can obtain healthcare or health care insurance.

Staffing patterns and schedule

The preschool program is in compliance with staff regulations and certification requirements. Our program follows requirements for staffing from Iowa's Quality Preschool Program Standards of maintaining an adult/child ratio of at least 1:10 at all times. The program administrator will maintain lists of current substitutes for both the preschool teacher and the preschool teaching assistant in case of absence. If one of the teaching staff needs to temporarily leave the classroom, the person will call the elementary office to arrange for coverage in order to maintain the adult/child ratio.

Staff are provided space and time away from children during the day. If staff work directly with children for more than four hours, staff are provided breaks of at least 15 minutes in each four-hour period. In addition, staff may request temporary relief when they are unable to perform their duties.

Staff Development Activities QPPS 6.6, 10.15

Personnel policies provide for incentives based on participation in professional development opportunities. All teaching staff continuously strengthen their leadership skills and relationships with others and work to improve the conditions of children and families within their programs, the local

community, and beyond. Teaching staff are encouraged to participate, in local, state, or regional public-awareness activities, in informal and formal ways. They may join an early childhood group or organization, attend meetings, or share information with others both inside and outside of the program.

Teaching staff will be informed of professional development activities provided by Child Care Resource and Referral, the local Empowerment areas, and the Area Education Agency. Staff are expected to attend training sessions and meetings throughout the year. Training will focus on early childhood topics relevant to the program and community.

Evaluation and Professional Growth Plan QPPS 6.5, 6.6

All staff are evaluated on a regular basis by an appropriate supervisor or, in the case of the program administrator, by the superintendent. Staff also evaluate and improve their own performance based on ongoing reflections and feedback from supervisors, peers, and families. From this, they develop an annual individualized Professional Growth Plan (PGP) with their supervisor and use it to document their continuous professional development.

Community Resources for Families

Kinetic Edge Pediatric Therapy
https://www.kineticedgept.com/
866-588-0230
Various sites in the Des Moines metro area

EFR Employee & Family Resources
www.efr.org/youth/sap/shtml
800-327-4692
EFR Student Assistance Program
Free counseling sessions for students/families in the district

Walnut Creek Psychiatry
https://walnutcreekpsych.com/
515-368-7504
223 S. Walnut Ave
Ames, IA 50010
School-based counseling services-paid for through individual insurance

Lifeworks-Therapy and Psychiatry Clinic
www.lifeworksdm.com
515-255-8399
schoolbased@lifeworksdm.com

School Counselors also have a list of area counselors for referrals upon request.

NP Comet Cupboard Indoor Food Pantry
Open 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of the month from 5:00 - 6:30 PM
(no appointment necessary).
Education Wing of Polk City United Methodist Church
1421 W. Broadway St, Polk City, IA 50226

Polk City Community Library

https://www.polkcityia.gov/library
1500 W. Broadway
984-6119

St. Luke's Clinic

https://freeclinicdirectory.org/detail/st-luke-s-clinic-polk-city-ia.html
Polk City United Methodist Church
1421 West Broadway St, Polk City, IA 50226
515-984-6274
1st & 3rd Wednesdays of each month from 6:00 to 8:00
(If the clinic is not busy, it may close early, but if you cannot make it until later, please call and they will stay open)

Heartland Area Education Agency

https://www.heartlandaea.org
6500 Corporate Drive
Johnston, **IA** 50131.
(515) 270-9030 · (800) 362-2720

Childserve

childserve.org
5406 Merle Hay Rd.
Johnston, IA 50131
(515) 727-8750

Free Clinics of Iowa

www.freeclinicsofiowa.org

Iowa Childcare Resource & Referral

https://iowaccrr.org/