



# **Early Childhood Program**

**Supplemental Family Handbook  
2026-2027**

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## Section 1

### Welcome

Welcome to CREC's Early Childhood Program. Our goal is to provide your child with a healthy, safe, and developmentally appropriate learning environment. Each CREC school offers a unique theme that allows children to identify, refine, and develop their talents and interests. Each school provides a diverse learning community that prepares children for living and learning as global citizens in a diverse environment. Our schools offer a personalized educational approach for each child in a curriculum designed to spark a lasting appreciation for knowledge. The focus of our early childhood curriculum is not just an accumulation of facts and skills but rather the strengthening of an ability to reason and think independently. **If your child has participated in Birth to 3 services**, we want to make sure the transition to our PK3 programs goes smoothly. To ensure there is no interruption of services, **please contact your Birth to 3 service coordinator and work with them to schedule a transition meeting with your local school district before your child turns 3**. This meeting will help establish your child's educational needs and **ensure the continuation of services**. In addition, please contact our school principal.

At Museum Academy our mascot is Whiskers the Wildcat! We have a WILDCAT **P.A.C.T** and we practice the Wildcat Ways: **P**ersistence, **A**ct with Integrity, **C**ompassion for others, **T**eam player!

### Mission of CREC Schools

The CREC Mission Statement is equity, excellence, and success for all, through high-quality educational services.

### Early Childhood Program Philosophy and Curriculum

We believe that children learn best in an environment where their interests and opinions are supported, their solutions to problems are encouraged, and active learning through play is valued. Our philosophy emphasizes respect for self, others, and the classroom environment.

CREC's Early Childhood Program curricula has its base in developmentally appropriate practice and uses the State of Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) as a guideline for lesson development and lesson design. The CT ELDS are learning and developmental outcomes to be intentionally addressed through planned experiences, materials, and interactions. Learning outcomes are achieved through:

- A variety of hands-on discovery activities and materials daily that support learning goals
- Responsive teaching staff who meet the individual needs of the children and families we serve
- Reflective practices that create an environment of inclusion and honor diversity
- Partnership with families that fosters strong reciprocal relationships and achieves mutually desired goals

### **Our Curriculum Philosophy**

At Museum Academy, we believe children learn best when they are actively engaged in meaningful, hands-on experiences that build on natural curiosity and interests. We believe our museum theme-based learning approach builds on young children's natural curiosity and interests while intentionally broadening their understanding of the world and connecting learning across developmental domains. Through exploration, inquiry, cooperative play, real-world experiences and collaboration, young children develop critical thinking, creativity, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Our museum theme-based learning approach provides meaningful opportunities for choice, allowing young children to pursue questions, investigate real-world topics, and make connections across all areas of learning. In addition, it broadens their perspectives through purposeful investigations, projects, museum resources, and collaborative experiences.

Young children are inspired to create 'artifacts' for parent night displays to "show what they know"; they also act as 'museum docents' during exhibition nights as each child explains their learning to visitors (family, community, staff and fellow students) in attendance.

Our educators thoughtfully plan children's learning experiences to be developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and inclusive of all learners. The curriculum is implemented using teacher observation and documentation to plan relevant, developmentally appropriate experiences where children can explore, experiment, play, and ask questions. Staff integrate our magnet school theme-learning "Museum Methods" with the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) for lesson design and implementation. This is integrated with the State of Connecticut Documentation and Observation for Teaching System (DOTS) for collecting and documenting evidence about children's interests, abilities, skills, and behaviors. This information is used for planning additional support, for summarizing children's progress, and communicating growth and development around common goals.

Families are valued partners in the learning process, and we encourage their participation by sharing children's learning, celebrating accomplishments, and extending learning experiences at home. By partnering with families and our museum and community resources, we create rich learning experiences that inspire children to become confident, capable, and joyful lifelong learners.

## MUSEUM ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT

Museum Academy fosters independent thinking in a creative and challenging museum-based environment by providing an innovative curriculum infused with art, museum partnerships, and museum methods. Our school is a safe, supportive environment where every child is a masterpiece.

### OUR MISSION IS TO:

**Provide students with a rigorous academic program that will prepare them for success.**

- Provide an educational environment that will strengthen students' social and emotional development.
- Foster learning and enrich the lives of the students through discovery, exploration, and creation.
- Reduce the racial and socio-economic barriers and create a quality integrated learning environment for all students.

### VISION STATEMENT

Museum Academy strives to create an environment that instills passionate curiosity; nurtures creative problem solving, cultivates critical thinkers and embraces cultural awareness in ways that bring success to all students.

**The learning environment at Museum Academy is driven by the following core principles:**

- Critical thinking
- Collaboration
- Communication

## **Section 2 –Classroom Routines and Procedures**

### **A Typical Day in our Preschool Program**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Greetings/<br/>Attendance</b>                                                                                                                                                                              | Teachers greet caregivers at the door and children participate in table activities or read books with teachers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Morning Meeting</b>                                                                                                                                                                                        | This daily meeting brings the students and teachers together and is comprised of the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Greeting and daily announcements</li><li>• Morning message</li><li>• Whole group activity</li><li>• Songs, rhymes and fingerplays</li><li>• Social curriculum</li><li>• Conversation and community building</li></ul> |
| <b>Snack Time</b>                                                                                                                                                                                             | Self-help skills will be emphasized.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Small Group Time</b>                                                                                                                                                                                       | Teachers initiate an activity of direct instruction focusing on the CT ELDS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Centers/<br/>Choice Time</b>                                                                                                                                                                               | Children carry out play plans, play in learning centers with purpose, solve problems, and construct knowledge.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Related Arts/<br/>Specials</b>                                                                                                                                                                             | The students participate in at least one related arts class each day (music, art, physical education, wellness).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Story Time</b>                                                                                                                                                                                             | Teachers read stories to the class, and children participate in literacy-related activities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Lunch</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Children may either bring lunch from home or buy at school.<br>Self-help skills will be emphasized.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Recess</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Children participate in energetic outdoor play and contact with nature.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Quiet/Naptime</b>                                                                                                                                                                                          | Children rest/nap comfortably and listen to quiet music.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Closing Circle Time</b>                                                                                                                                                                                    | The class reviews the day, shares a story, or participates in movement games or songs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>We recognize that routine and structure are essential for a preschooler’s sense of well-being. Therefore, each classroom has a predictable schedule from 8:40 a.m. to 3:05 p.m. Monday through Friday.</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

### **Safe Arrival and Departure**

The Early Childhood Program is a full-day, full-week program. Children are expected to **attend daily**. It is important that each child begin and end the school day on time. When children arrive late to school, they miss one of the most important components of the day, including the morning meeting. During the morning meeting, the day's events are reviewed, and children have the opportunity to greet one another and plan their day together. Thus, it is very important that children arrive on time for school. You are required to escort your child to the designated arrival drop-off location each morning.

At Museum Academy, our preschool program ends at 3:05 pm, and all students must be picked up from the gym doors. If a child is not picked up from school by dismissal time, the parent will be asked to sign a late pick-up form, which is in the main office. All children will be accounted for with a procedure developed by the classroom teacher.

### **Using the Bathroom**

As a preschool program, we do not have the essential equipment or staffing to meet optimal health standards for diapering children. Therefore, families are strongly encouraged to **ensure that their children are toilet-trained before starting in the preschool program at the beginning of the school year**. The exception would be if this were identified in an IEP or 504 Plan as a manifestation of the child's disability. We understand the transition to school may result in some initial toileting accidents. We will work with the child's family to ensure consistency both at home and at school. Children should be as self-sufficient as possible. Children are more successful when they wear pants with no snaps, buttons, or zippers. **Pants with elastic waist and underwear (not pull-ups) support children's independence with toileting.** Early Childhood teachers will provide reminders to guide and support children who have had a toileting accident.

### **Clothing**

Children play daily with sand, water, paint, and playdough. Smocks are provided for water play and painting, but still, sometimes clothing gets wet or soiled. Children are encouraged to wear clothing that they do not mind getting dirty and that they can easily pull on and off by themselves as needed. Please always provide your child with two sets of extra clothing for school. This includes easy-to-pull-on/off pants, socks, underwear, and shirts. **Please label all clothing with your child's name on it.**

### **Outdoor Play and Sunscreen Application**

We play outside every day, weather permitting. The school nurse informs the teaching staff if recommendations from health authorities or dangerous conditions prevent outdoor play. Please ensure your child comes to school with the appropriate outerwear. Please label all outerwear with your child's initials or name. Playground-safe shoes are important. Please ensure your child wears non-slip, closed-toed shoes (sneakers are ideal).

Please apply UVA/UVB (SPF15 or higher) sunscreen protection on your child before school. Teachers do not apply sunscreen. Sunscreen is not allowed in children's cubbies. Please contact the school nurse if your child requires another application of sunscreen during the day.

When public health authorities recommend the use of insect repellent due to the high risk of insect-borne disease, please apply this to your child prior to arriving at school. Teachers do not apply insect repellent. Insect repellent is not allowed in children's cubbies. Please contact the school nurse if your child requires another application of repellent during the day.

Playground-safe shoes are important. Please ensure your child wears non-slip, closed-toed shoes (sneakers are ideal).

### **Snacks/Meals**

Daily snacks are an important part of meeting the nutritional needs of young children. See NAEYC approved snack list for more details (appendix).

Snacks include:

- fruits and vegetables
- dairy (cheese, yogurt, milk)
- meat or protein (beans)
- bread (crackers)

If a child has food allergies, the school nurse will develop a care plan that will be shared with all relevant teaching staff and the Bloomfield Food Service staff.

**We adhere to NAEYC Accreditation guidelines and therefore are *not allowed to offer children high-risk foods for choking, such as whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, hard pretzels, raw carrots, raw peas, or hot dogs.* This applies to foods served as well as foods brought from home.**

### **Lunches**

We are **not allowed to heat food** brought from home. Preschool students eat at specific times each day. Museum Academy staff are with the students during their lunchtime. You have the option to either order a school lunch for your child or pack a lunch from home.

### **Fast Food Restrictions:**

Parents may not bring in fast food to the school classroom or cafeteria during lunch. This includes McDonald's, Burger King, etc., at school. Students are **not permitted to receive food deliveries from any outside service**, including DoorDash, Uber Eats, Grubhub, or similar delivery apps or companies, on school grounds.

Carbonated **soda** and **glass** containers are not allowed in the school classroom or lunchroom.

### **Rest Time**

Our daily schedule includes a balance of quiet and active activities. Rest Time is scheduled for one hour each day (60 minutes) with a settling-in period beforehand. We provide mats for your child to sleep on. Please provide a **small** blanket that can be easily stored in your child's cubby. Please label this blanket with your child's name on it. This blanket should be taken home each Friday afternoon to be laundered and returned the following Monday.

### **Toys From Home**

Please **keep toys from home at home**, as they can be lost or broken at school.

### **Celebrations (birthdays and holidays)**

Birthday "parties" are not supported in the classroom. All birthdays are recognized in each classroom during the day.

Please be reminded that we cannot hold birthday parties, distribute food, goodie bags, or invitations.

Please be aware that not all religions recognize birthdays. It is our wish that all students and parents are sensitive and understanding of these circumstances.

Thank you for respecting these guideline

### **Section 3 – Health and Safety**

#### **Handwashing Practices**

Young children are particularly susceptible to illness once they begin school, affecting their health and causing missed educational opportunities.

While illness is not always preventable, we take measures to reduce the risk of infection by practicing good handwashing and cleaning procedures.

We will teach the proper handwashing procedures as part of our curriculum, and we ask all children to wash their hands upon arrival, before and after meals, after playing outdoors, and after using the toilet.

We will use hand sanitizers as an alternative when hands are not visibly soiled.

#### **Required Health Forms**

To provide the best experience, early childhood providers must understand your child's health needs. The health form requires information from you (Part I), which will be helpful to the health care provider when he or she completes the health evaluation (Part II).

State law requires complete primary immunizations and a health assessment by a physician, an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), a physician assistant (PA), a legally qualified practitioner of medicine, or an advanced practice registered nurse, or a physician assistant stationed at any military base **prior** to entering an early childhood program in Connecticut.

## **Section 4 – Home-School Communication**

### **Communication between Family and Teacher**

A strong family-school partnership is important to the success of our Early Childhood Program. In addition to the Family-Teacher conferences held over the year, each teacher sends home regular updates via Seesaw, newsletters, and/ or emails, keeping families apprised as to what is happening in the classroom. Drop-off and Pick-Up times are an opportunity to share brief updates or ask quick questions of your child's teacher. You may also contact your child's teacher by phone via the school office, SEESAW, or school email.

### **Volunteering**

If you would like to volunteer in your child's classroom, please arrange a time to do so with your child's classroom teacher. You might like to plan a special activity around the unit the children are concentrating on, or you might want to do a craft project with the children. You may want to read a story to the children or help them write their own! We hope you will consider volunteering in the classroom. It is an ideal way to see what the children are working on and how learning through play is valued. As a volunteer, you are expected to maintain confidentiality.

### **Conferences**

At Museum Academy, an **Intake Conference** is held at the beginning of the year so that families can tell us about their child as seen through their eyes. Together, teacher and caregiver develop mutual goals for each child. Twice a year, in December and March, we address children's interests and progress towards the CT Early Learning and Development Standards during family-teacher conferences.

| <b>Marking Periods</b>    | <b>Parent-Teacher Conferences</b>                                          |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Parent Intake Conferences | September 9 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup><br>Family Welcome Conferences |
| First                     | December 9&10th<br>Family-Teacher Conferences                              |
| Second                    | March 10-11th – Family-Teacher Conferences                                 |
| Third                     | June -Progress Reports are sent electronically on last day of school       |

### **End-of-Year Transitions**

At the Museum Academy, the early childhood program is a two-year program. Children attending preschool for a second year (PK3 to PK4) generally stay in their present classroom with their current teacher for the second year. At the end of each school year, teachers will help prepare each child for the transition to summer and for PK4 or 5-year-old children for transition to kindergarten, if eligible. Children moving on to kindergarten will visit the kindergarten classrooms to familiarize themselves with the new environment.

**Under some circumstances, the preschool teacher and the principal may recommend to the family that the child should remain in the preschool program for a third year because they believe developmentally the child would benefit from an additional year. In most cases, age-eligible children will move on to kindergarten. To ensure a smooth transition, preschool and kindergarten teachers meet to discuss individual children's needs at the end of preschool.**

### **Program Surveys**

We ask that all families please complete an annual survey to help us evaluate our programming. The Family Survey, distributed in March, provides you with an opportunity to share with staff your thoughts about your child's care and education in our program. Your responses to the survey questions are an ongoing method to inform our school's mission for maintaining high-quality standards in our program.

### **Program Hours**

- **SCHOOL HOURS**  
8:40 a.m. – 3:20 p.m. 3:05 p.m. Preschool dismissal from the gym doors.
- **2-Hour DELAYED OPENING DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER START TIME**  
10:40 a.m.
- **EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS END TIME**  
12:00 p.m.

