Mary Washington Howe Pre-K Center Family Handbook 2026-2027



1020 Meares Street
Wilmington, NC 28401

Leigh Ann Lampley, Director/Principal

Orientation

This is a required event each year. Orientation provides parents/caregivers the opportunity to learn about policies, procedures, committees, and our school. During this time, families will complete and sign all remaining paperwork necessary for our program. Please review this handbook including the attached documents (Receipt of Policies) prior to orientation. Students may not start school unless the parent/caregiver has participated in orientation, home visits and completed ALL necessary paperwork.

Staff

The Pre-K Program is proud of its dedicated and professional staff. Staff members have been chosen for the position because of their special talents and their commitment to the early learning needs of your children. All teachers are certified by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and each class has a teacher and a teacher assistant. In addition, staff members receive training in early childhood topics during the school year at workshops, conferences, and professional meetings. Teachers have also received training in CPR, First Aid, and in educational technology workshops. When a staff member is absent, a qualified substitute replaces the teacher and/or teacher assistant in the classroom.

The policies and procedures you find in this handbook are aligned to the laws, requirements, and regulations set forth by the following agencies. Please understand that we are required to follow the most stringent guidelines at all times.

NC Division of Child Development and Early Education	http://ncchildcare.nc.gov
North Carolina Health and Sanitation	http://ehs.ncpublichealth.com
New Hanover County Schools Board Of Education	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/
NC Pre-K Requirements	http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us

NEW HANOVER COUNTY SCHOOLS PRE-K PROGRAM

The New Hanover County Pre-Kindergarten program is committed to creating a strong foundation that prepares all students for academic, social and emotional success as they enter the 21st century.

NEW HANOVER COUNTY SCHOOLS MISSION

The mission of New Hanover County Schools, in collaboration with our parents and the community, is to strive to provide children with an opportunity for a superior education in a safe and positive learning environment where they are prepared with the skills to succeed.

NEW HANOVER COUNTY SCHOOLS PRE-K PROGRAM MISSION

The New Hanover County Pre-Kindergarten program is committed to establishing a foundation of learning by inspiring, guiding, and teaching the children in our program while serving their families and the community. We believe that all children have individual worth and can succeed in the future when given a positive foundation of learning**.**

MARY WASHINGTON HOWE PRE-K

Mission (Revised 9/22/25)

Mary Washington Howe Prekindergarten Center, in conjunction with a collaborative community, will foster an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment that acknowledges and celebrates the diverse cultural backgrounds of all children, families, and staff. Our school family will create a cooperative learning experience in which children will embrace problem-solving, critical thinking, and thoughtful interactions with others, and an enthusiasm for learning that lays a foundation for a successful K-12 education and beyond. We aim to ensure that every child receives an education that is culturally relevant, equitable, inclusive, and promotes positive relationships among children.

Vision

We will lay a foundation for children and families to have a positive learning experience that will equip them for a successful future.

OUR BELIEFS ABOUT CHILDREN AND LEARNING

We believe that children need nurturing caregivers in the home and school setting.

We believe that children learn through active involvement with developmentally appropriate materials, and that play is an important vehicle for learning to occur.

We believe that children need to be able to identify and communicate their feelings, needs and desires in positive ways in a preschool setting.

We believe that children must learn to make decisions and accept responsibility for those decisions and learn to solve real-life problems, not just find the “right” answers.

We believe that a child’s development and learning is greatly enhanced through a partnership between the school and the child’s family.

We believe that your child is in the best possible place with the best staff.

DAILY OPERATIONAL POLICIES

School Hours

Student hours: 7:00 am - 1:45 pm
Front office hours: 7:00 am - 3:00 pm

All students must be picked up by 2:00 pm.
After school care is not provided on site.
No check out after 1:15 pm.

Sample NC Pre-K Daily Schedule

7:00	Arrival / Morning Centers	45 minutes
7:50	Morning Meeting	15 minutes
8:15	Breakfast	25 minutes
8:50	Read Aloud / Mini Lesson	15 minutes
9:15	Centers	60 minutes
10:15	Outdoor Play	60 minutes
11:30	Lunch	30 minutes
12:15	Rest TIme	45 minutes
1:00	Centers	35 minutes
1:30	Snack / Review of the day	15 minutes
1:45	Dismissal	

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is very important for success in our program. Parents have the responsibility to ensure regular school attendance. Regular attendance is necessary for your child to get the greatest benefit from this learning opportunity. Anytime children are absent from school, they fall out of their routine. They also miss out on key opportunities to learn, build lasting friendships, and develop the skills and attitudes needed to become good citizens. There is a clear connection between student attendance and student performance in school. In order for your child to meet the goals of our program and to be ready for kindergarten, students need to attend a full day of school each day. which means arriving on time every day.

Why does this matter?

- **Failure to maintain adequate attendance can jeopardize your child's placement at Howe Pre-K.**
- We want your child to establish good habits in Pre-K.
- Chronic absenteeism (truancy) is linked to repeating grade levels and drop out rates.

Unexcused Absences: missing the bus, oversleeping, bad weather, car trouble

Excused Absences: illness, religious holidays, death in immediate family, medical appointment note, quarantine, education opportunities with prior approval, court or administrative proceedings.

In order to code an absence as excused, Howe is required to have a note from home which meets the following:
1. Date(s) of absence(s) included
2. Specific reasons for absence
3. A parent/guardian signature must be provided.
4. The note for the absence must be received within 3 days of the child's return to school if the absence is to be coded as excused.
5. A written note from a parent does not automatically result in an excused absence. The reason for the absence must be one of those determined by Public School Law.

You will be contacted by the teacher, assistant, or social worker after the third consecutive day of absence.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL SAFETY REMINDERS

NC Childcare Law

Children younger than age 8 and who weigh less than 80 pounds must be properly secured in a child restraint or booster seat. Children less than age 5 and less than 40 pounds must be in the rear seat if the vehicle has an active passenger-side front air bag and a rear seat.

Responsibility/Penalties (According to Buckleup.gov)

- Driver is responsible for all children less than sixteen
- Penalty not to exceed $25
- Full court costs and fees apply to failure to secure a child in an appropriate CRS or seat belt violations
- Two (2) driver license points

Child Care Rules

(NC Child Care Rules)
Specifically look at Page 50)

- **10A NCAC 09 .1003 SAFE PROCEDURES**
  - *(b) Each center shall establish procedures for pick-up and delivery of children to ensure children are protected from danger and not exposed to risk of harm. These procedures shall be communicated to parents, and a copy shall be posted in the center where they can be seen by the parents.*

In order to ensure the safety of our students:

1. All students must be loaded from the right side of the car into an appropriate car seat or booster seat.
2. Staff will no longer load students from the left side of the vehicle due to street traffic.
3. Vehicles without appropriate car/booster seats will be asked to leave the car line and pull around and park. Parents will be required to show an ID to retrieve their child at the front door. (Staff will not load students into cars without car seats/booster seats.)

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

The school building opens at 7:00 am. Morning drop off for parents is 7:00 am - 7:30 am. Parents are not allowed to walk students to class. It is highly recommended that parents utilize the carpool dropoff between 7:00 and 7:20 each morning.

Parents and children will not be permitted to enter the building until 7:00 am unless you have a prearranged meeting with your child's teacher.

For your convenience we offer carpool drop off from 7:00 - 7:20 am. Due to NC Child Care Licensing Laws we must stop carpool drop off at 7:20 am to move staff into the classrooms to ensure the appropriate child to staff ratio.

Parents arriving in the car line after 7:20 will need to park and walk their child to the front door and be signed in by a staff member. We operate by hand-to-hand delivery. This means that all children must be handed off from one adult to another. The bell rings at 7:30. All students are expected to be in their classrooms to start the school day at that time.

Students arriving after 7:30 am are considered tardy and will need to sign in at the front office and will be escorted to the classroom by a staff member. Excessive tardiness disrupts your child's routine. Please make all efforts to arrive on time to school.

It is **so** important to establish good habits in Pre-K as they will last throughout your child's educational career!

DISMISSAL
AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE GUIDELINES

All students must be picked up by the parent/ guardian or someone who has been authorized by the parent/ guardian and is listed on the appropriate Transportation Authorization and Authorization for Pick Up forms that are included in the orientation packet. Please inform the individuals listed that they will be required to show their identification prior to taking the child from campus. It is the parent's responsibility to update the names of individuals who are authorized to pick up your child.
Students will only be released to an adult, 18 years of age or older, who is authorized by the parent. All parents and authorized adults are REQUIRED by law to show a photo ID when picking up a student.

Bus drivers are also required to verify the identification of an adult before releasing a student to get off the school bus.

We **WILL NOT** release your child to any person who:

1) is not listed on the Transportation Authorization Form or Authorization for Pick Up Form **AND**
2) cannot produce a government-issued photo ID.

EARLY DISMISSAL

If a student must check out during the day, a parent or guardian must come to the school office to sign out the child. The child will then be called to the office. Please do not call and ask that a child wait for you in the office. Office personnel will call for the student when you arrive. Continual early checkouts will be referred to a social worker and administration. **Parents/guardians will not be able to check out their children between 1:15 and 1:45 pm** as the whole school has begun to prepare for our afternoon dismissal procedures. If parent/guardian arrives at 1:15 or after for early check out, they will be directed to the car rider line for dismissal at 1:45.

DAILY DISMISSAL

Our school day ends at 1:45 pm. After school care is not offered at Howe Pre-K but there are several alternatives available to families. All students are required to have arrangements for their afternoon dismissal.

Our dismissal routine is conducted with **student safety as the top priority** and is meant to ensure that each child is accounted for at the end of the day.

We will have 4 areas for dismissal:

Car Riders - 10th Street
Bus Riders - Meares Street
Daycare Vans - Meares Street
Walkers - Front porch at Entrance Two (by Classroom 1)

WALKERS

For safety, parents/guardians who walk from their residence will retrieve their child at the front entrance areas. Walkers will be dismissed **after the car rider line has finished, usually around 2:00**. Photo ID is required.

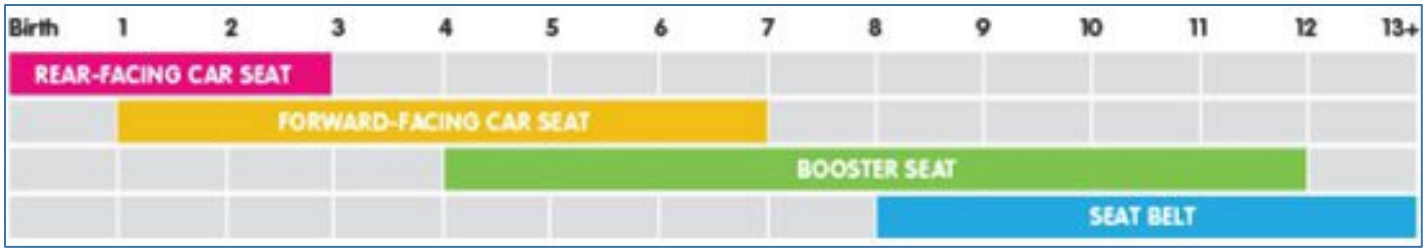
CAR RIDER PROCEDURES

For your convenience, we have established car rider procedures in an effort to provide the safest and most efficient process for our families and staff.

Car rider dismissal will be available from 1:45 until 2:00. Parents are required to arrive by 2:00 pm to pick up students. Parents arriving after 2:00 will be required to check out their child from the front office.

1. Stay in your car!
2. We will provide 2 tags per family.
3. Only authorized individuals with a Howe Pre-K car tag will be permitted to pick up a child in the car rider line.
4. The car tag should be clearly displayed in the window when you come through the car rider line.
5. If you give your official Howe Pre-K car tag to another person, you are authorizing that person to pick up your child. Their photo ID will not be checked.
6. Please do not leave your car unattended in the car rider lane. Parents must remain in their vehicle until the child is brought to the car.
7. A teacher will escort your child to the car and open the car door for your child. However, it is the responsibility of the driver or another passenger in each car to buckle/ secure the child in the child safety seat. School staff members are not permitted to buckle seat belts. (Please move down out of the way to buckle your child.)
8. Just as your child's safety is our number one concern while your child is at Howe Pre-K, we are also concerned about your child's safety when they are riding in your vehicle. NC laws dictate child passenger safety seats. Generally speaking, all students at Howe Pre-K should be riding in, at minimum, a booster seat.

Please note: If you do not have the official Howe Pre-K tag or a safety seat, you will be asked to park your car and come to the front office with your photo identification. We will check to ensure that you are able to pick up the requested student(s) before allowing the student(s) to leave with you.





BUS RIDERS

Bus Stop Eligibility: students 1.5 miles outside the safe walking distance of their assigned school are eligible. Students who attend an out of district school, such as Open Choice schools, are not eligible. Exceptions such as special route transportation must be approved by the Transportation Department. Students must use the bus at least three times per week to remain eligible for bus transportation.

How to Get a Bus

To request a bus stop, contact the school's main office. Students are assigned to a community stop nearest their home address and must be assigned a bus number before they can ride.

Request Deadlines

Current school year bus requests will roll over into the new school year. New bus stop requests must be made before the deadline in order to ride the bus on the first day of school. Late bus stop requests will not be processed until after the first two weeks of school. School bus transportation will not be available until a Bus Pass is issued to the student.

Year Round: June 23, 2026
Restart: July 15, 2026
Isaac Bear - July 13, 2026
Early Colleges/SeaTech: July 21, 2026
Traditional: July 31, 2026
Pre K: August 13, 2026

Following the first two weeks of school, students will be notified of bus assignments by receiving a Bus Pass at the school. Bus requests take 3-5 days to process.

Rider Requirements
Riders must use the bus at least three times per week to remain eligible for bus transportation. Students should be at the bus stop 10 minutes before their scheduled pick-up time and allow time for delays due to traffic. Students may only get on or off at their assigned stop - any exception must first be approved by both the school and Transportation. Failure to follow rider requirements may result in a permanent De-Assignment from the bus. To track the bus, download the Edulog Parent Portal App. See instructions below.

Permission Forms
All pre-Kindergarten students must be met at their stop by a parent/legal guardian or a named designee in advance and in writing or they will be returned to school. Students repeatedly returned to school may be permanently de-assigned from transportation.

New Hanover County Schools Transportation Department determines the walk zones for all schools, bus routes,and bus stop assignments. Eligible students are assigned morning and afternoon buses to their home address. Students are only permitted to ride the bus they've been assigned. Students are automatically removed from a bus route when they have not ridden the bus for three consecutive days.

A parent, guardian, or authorized adult (18 years or older) MUST be present at the bus stop each day. Due to scheduling, buses cannot wait for a parent to arrive at the stop. Children will be returned to school if an authorized adult is not at the bus stop when the bus arrives. The parent, guardian, or authorized adult will then be required to pick up the student at the school. After a child has been returned to the school three times, their bus riding privileges will be revoked.

Times given are estimated and may vary depending on traffic; please be ready and at the Bus Stop at least 10 minutes early.

Forms to Download:

- **Bus Stop Drop-Off Permission Form 2026-2027 English**
- **Bus Stop Drop-Off Permission Form 2025-2026 Spanish**
- **Special Education Afternoon Release Consent Form 2026-2027**

TRANSPORTATION CHANGES

Parents must communicate **in writing** to the teacher **all** transportation changes. All transportation changes must be received in writing by 12:00 pm. **We do not accept changes over the phone.**

How to Track Your Bus - Chipmunk

The best way to track your bus is by downloading the NEW Chipmunk Bus Tracking App. The App provides secure, personalized bus information so you can see your student's bus in real time. It also notifies you of scheduled pickup and drop-off times, as well as any bus substitutions.

Please note: Only student contacts with an email address listed in your student's Infinite Campus account are eligible to enroll.

View this video for easy App instructions: NHCS Chipmunk Bus Tracking App

Chipmunk How-To Brochure (English)
Chipmunk How-To Brochure (Spanish)

Instructions can be found on the Transportation website at :
https://www.nhcs.net/divisions/operations/transportation/edulog-parent-portal-bus-tracking

CALENDAR

Howe Pre-K will follow the approved Pre-K school calendar for New Hanover County Schools. The Pre-K calendar varies slightly from the Traditional K-12 school calendar. Note that Pre-K students DO NOT attend school when traditional schools have half days or a delayed start time!
In the event of severe weather, please listen to the radio or television for an announcement of school closings. Any school closings will also be announced through the system-wide School Messenger telephone messaging network. If New Hanover County Schools are closed, Howe Pre-K is closed. If New Hanover County Schools are going to have a delayed opening, Howe Pre-K will be closed.

CHANGES IN INFORMATION

If you change your address, phone number or persons listed as emergency contacts, please send the information to your child's teacher immediately. It is important that this information be accurate at all times so we are able to reach you in case of emergencies. Please be sure to include both cell and main phone numbers.

CHANGES IN HOME LIFE

If your family relationships change, please share this information with your child's teacher. It will be kept in strict confidence. Family changes often affect your child at school.

CHILD CUSTODY

If there are special custody agreements for a child, the parent(s) must notify the child's teacher and the school principal. Court documentation must be provided that addresses the custody agreement. Without court documentation that says otherwise, both parents listed on a child's birth certificate will have equal access to the child.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

- Every citizen, including parent and child care workers, has the legal responsibility to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the proper authorities.
- A report can be made by phoning the NHCS Department of Social Services at the child abuse hotline number (910) 798-3420 or by calling 911. If you need to make a report after 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, or on the weekend, or a holiday please call 911 and ask to speak to the social worker on duty.
- An individual failing to report, or knowingly preventing another from doing so is guilty of second-degree misdemeanor and may be prosecuted.

NHCS employees are required to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

COMMUNICATION

The home and school communication connection is very important. All teachers have county-provided email addresses and are expected to check their email daily. However, while students are in the building, teachers have limited access to email. Email addresses of all teachers can be found on our school's website.. All students are given ***one Home/School Communicator folder.***

Parents are expected to do the following daily:
1. Read and sign papers in the blue folder
2. Most communication can be handled through written notes and emails to the teacher. Send any notes to the teacher when necessary.
3. Call the teacher when you have a question or a concern. Please remember teachers are unable to take phone calls during instructional time, but our front office staff will take the message and have the teacher return your phone call. Teachers are required to return all calls within 48 hours.
4. Messages regarding changes in transportation should not be sent by text or phone. The request must be in writing and can be sent to the teacher in the blue folder or emailed to the teacher.
5. Parent/teacher conferences and home visits are an integral part of reporting and monitoring student progress. Parent/teacher conferences and home visits are held during the school year to share information with parents about students' progress on the pre-academic skills outlined under the curriculum section.
We are partners with you in the education of your child; therefore, it is important to share information regularly.

CURRICULUM

Children in Pre-K learn through play using exploration and discovery as a way of learning, The Creative Curriculum enables children to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills. It is based on 38 objectives for development and learning which are fully aligned with our state standards and fall under the following domains: reading, math, social-emotional, physical, and language.

Conscious Discipline Our Social-Emotional Core instruction comes from the philosophies of Conscious Discipline. Our goal is to assist students with learning self-regulation.

Creative Curriculum

We follow The Creative Curriculum Fifth Edition, Teaching Strategies GOLD and Conscious Discipline. Second Step is also used for teaching social skills which are a priority in Pre-K. The variety of instructional programs will be used to provide a solid academic foundation for children. Pre-academic skills are rarely taught in isolation, and are integrated into a variety of instructional and play activities woven throughout the school day.

HOMEWORK

Parents of children attending the Pre-Kindergarten program in New Hanover County Schools are asked to spend time reading to their child each evening. (We suggest one minute per year of your child's age.) In addition to reading, teachers may give children short assignments to reinforce a skill that they are learning in the classroom. For example, your child may be asked to look for a certain number of items in the home (environment) or find items that are a specific shape. It is important to follow through with these activities, as they will reinforce what your child is learning and impress upon your child the importance of school and education.

MTSS TEAM

The mission of the Multi Tiered Systems of Support Team is to design and implement timely intervention strategies targeting improved performance of an individual student. The Team utilizes a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach to support students, teachers, parents and others as a vehicle to ensure the success of each student. Parents and staff members with concerns about a student may request assistance from the team. The primary responsibility of the team is to help teachers and parents meet the needs of students. This may include developing interventions, proposing, and designing services, requesting evaluations, and possibly proposing an Individualized Education Program.

HEALTH

We make every effort to observe and teach healthy practices at school. Children are encouraged to practice good toileting habits, and to wash hands after toileting and before eating. We also encourage children to cover coughs and wipe runny noses.

The best way to prevent the spread of illness is to make sure you do not send your child to school when he or she is visibly ill. Please **DO NOT** send your child to school if **any** of the following is present:

- Live Lice
- Bedbugs
- Ringworm
- Fever
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Thick, discolored nasal discharge
- Chest congestion or constant cough
- First 24 hours on antibiotic medicine
- Pink eye
- Rash or impetigo
- Earache
- Sore throat with fever
- Communicable diseases such as: chicken pox, measles, mumps, strep throat, hepatitis, etc.

Your child may ask to come to school even though he/she is ill. We understand that your child may be disappointed, but we ask that you please keep him/her at home when he/she is sick.

CHILDREN ARE NOT PERMITTED TO RETURN TO SCHOOL UNTIL THEY ARE SYMPTOM FREE FOR <u>24 HOURS</u>!

If you have any questions about whether your child should come to school with a medical condition, please call the school and ask to speak to the school nurse. In addition, please inform the school if your child becomes ill with a highly contagious illness such as chicken pox, flu, strep throat, pink eye, etc. We will want to notify the parents of the other children so they can watch for symptoms.

Your child's physical health is very important to us. Always send a note to school whenever your child is absent explaining the reasons for the absence. A note must be sent to school in order for the absence to be noted as excused. Teachers or assistants will contact you after a third absence.

If your child becomes ill while at school, we will make every effort to contact you or the persons designated on the emergency contact forms. If your child has a medical emergency, we will also call all of the people listed on the emergency contact list. Please be sure that we have your home, work, and cell phone numbers and that these numbers are kept current. Please make sure this information is kept up to date by informing the office and the teacher. If no one can be reached, we will take the child to New Hanover Regional Medical Center for emergency treatment and act on the parents' behalf until they can be reached.

EMERGENCY CARE PLANS

Please notify your child's teacher if your child has a serious medical condition, such as diabetes, asthma, sickle cell anemia, or severe allergies. It is important that we have an emergency care plan in place to provide the necessary medical care for your child if the situation arises.

ASTHMA

The nurse will work with the family and child's physician to develop a care plan for an asthmatic student to include the teacher/staff having the appropriate preventative or emergency medications on hand to treat symptoms of an asthma attack or severe allergic reaction.

DIABETES

North Carolina law (G.S. 115C-47) was changed in 2002 to strengthen support for students with diabetes attending NC public schools. The law requires development of care plans and staff training relative to students with diabetes. If your child has diabetes please let us know so that we can have our school nurse contact you to complete a Parental Request for an Individual Diabetes Care Plan.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

We will give medication to children under the following conditions:

- A medical form must be obtained from the office, filled out and signed by the prescribing doctor as well as the parent or legal guardian.
- The prescription must be current. **Medicine must be brought in by the legal guardian in the original container/ prescription bottle. Do not send any medicine, prescription or over-the-counter, to school by your child**.
- The child's name and dose must appear on the container. Expired medication will not be given.

SUNSCREEN

Sunscreen protects the skin from the sun's ultraviolet rays and helps to prevent sunburn. Children go outside for at least one outside play time each day and for a minimum of 60 minutes daily. During the summer and spring months, classes are outside more frequently. In an effort to protect your child's skin from the damage that exposure to direct sunlight can cause, please apply sunscreen to all exposed areas prior to sending your child to school each day. This is extremely important if your child is prone to sunburn. The school is not permitted to apply sunscreen or allow children to have sunscreen in their backpacks.

PREVENTION OF SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME AND ABUSIVE HEAD T RAUMA POLICY

TOBACCO FREE CAMPUS

It is the belief of the New Hanover County Board of Education that the use of tobacco is harmful to general health. The Board desires that all New Hanover County School facilities and properties be free from the use of tobacco products. Therefore, the use of tobacco and all smoking devices in or on New Hanover County School facilities or property is prohibited.

LOST AND FOUND

Parents are asked to put the child's name in/on all of his or her belongings. Sweaters, coats, hats, and lunch boxes are items that are frequently lost. If an item is missing, please check with your child's teacher or the bus driver.

NUTRITION

Breakfast, lunch, and snacks are provided each day at no cost to students. Howe Pre-K is a Community Eligibility Provision School. Child Care Licensure requires meals to be nutritionally balanced. In order to ensure compliance with the DCDEE requirements, all students are required to eat the food provided by the Howe Pre-K cafeteria. Outside food and beverages will not be permitted for breakfast, lunch, or snack. Our meals are defined as follows:

Breakfast: milk, juice or fruit, & bread or cereal (all 3 components)
Lunch: milk, 2 or more fruits or vegetables, meat or meat alternative, bread or bread alternative (all 4 components)
Families who request to opt out of this nutrition program must schedule a conference with the principal. If your child has special dietary restrictions or food allergies due to a medical condition, please communicate this to your child's teacher and the school nurse. Documentation from a physician will be required and well as completion of appropriate paperwork.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

New Hanover County

NC Pre-K Family Engagement Plan

NCPK sites shall implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that share decision making. In order to make this happen, different types of communication channels may be used. Some of these are and are not limited to:

- Newsletters
- Daily notes
- Telephone
- Text
- Email
- Digital platforms
- Social media
- Bulletin boards
- Webinars
- Workshops

Parents will be offered:

- Home Visits (Required Home Visit at the beginning of the year)
- 3 parent/teacher conferences to discuss fall, winter, spring/end of year child progress
- To volunteer and/or attend field trips
- Serve on any committee/parent groups which may be offered at the site
- Notification of family community events (e.g. Smart Start parenting programs, etc.)

When children are enrolled during the year, parent/teacher conferences will be adjusted as needed.

CELEBRATIONS AND BIRTHDAYS

Classroom celebrations are held during the school year. Your child's teacher will send a letter home with your child in their communication folder notifying you of any planned parties. If you do not want your child to participate in a holiday or class celebration, please notify your child's teacher. It is the parents' responsibility to inform their child that they cannot participate. Please discuss with your child prior to the scheduled party/celebration.

We believe that each child is a unique and wonderful creation and recognize that birthdays can be a special day for the child. If you would like to bring refreshments for your child's birthday, please make arrangements in advance with your child's teacher. Generally, birthdays are celebrated with small food items such as cupcakes or cookies.. **These items must be store bought only and must be in the original packaging.** All birthday treats must be served at the end of the day and are not allowed to take the place of school lunch. *As we promote healthy living parents who wish to send in a birthday treat are encouraged to send in healthy alternatives such as Gogurt or any other healthy treats. No pizza, cakes, drinks, or gift bags are allowed.

Please let us know if your family celebrates a holiday that is different from traditional American holidays. We would love for you to visit and share some of the traditions and symbols of the holiday with the rest of us.
Our program does not allow balloons in our classrooms. Balloons will not be permitted in the building.

CELL PHONE USE

To protect the time that parents spend with their children in the school, parents are asked to position their phones to vibrate when in the building, and to refrain from having phone conversations when visiting the building and especially during classroom volunteer time. At no time are students permitted to use a cell phone.

Parent Visitation at Lunch: Due to space and child care restrictions, we do not allow parents or visitors to have lunch with students.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Each school is required by state law to develop a School Improvement Plan. A School Improvement Team, consisting of staff and parent representatives, oversees the improvement process. Parent representatives are elected by the parents of students in our school. Parents are always invited to attend these meetings.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Public schools and licensed childcare facilities are required to conduct routine safety drills in preparation for emergency situations. Fire drills will be held monthly to ensure that children know how to respond in the event

that the building has to be evacuated. An annual tornado drill is held each spring and an earthquake drill is held in the fall. In addition, we will practice quarterly lockdown drills and shelter in place drills to ensure that children and staff know how to respond in the event that an emergency arises that requires us to stay within the confines of the school building and classrooms. Emergency bags are located in each classroom which contains plans, contact information as well as emergency supplies.

The district has extensive and comprehensive safety plans that are continually reviewed and updated as necessary by district personnel along with our Emergency Services partners. The New Hanover County Schools Emergency Operations Plan Summary is available on the district website.

We constantly strive to make every facility in our district as safe as possible. All exterior doors remain locked during the school day, requiring every visitor to check-in at the main office after being screened using a front door entry system that includes video and audio. There are School Resource Officers and School Nurses assigned to each school. Additionally, students and staff periodically conduct drills for all types of emergencies throughout the school year.

The New Hanover County School system, along with all of the Emergency Services within the county, works cooperatively to keep our students safe. Staff at every campus are trained to respond to numerous types of emergencies.

Student and staff safety is a priority, and everyone plays a part in maintaining safe schools. Additional information can be found here: https://www.nhcs.net/divisions/student-support-services/safety-and-crisis-management

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Parents are asked to provide students with a full size book bag (without wheels) and a water bottle for school. Also bring a small rest time blanket and a full change of clothes, including underwear and socks (change out with the seasons.) All school supplies that your child will need will be provided by the school. Paper, scissors, glue, crayons, and markers are supplies that you may want to have at home to give your child an opportunity to write, draw, and cut. These activities will support what your child is learning at school and enhance his or her pre-academic skills.

SENDING MONEY TO SCHOOL

Any time you send money to school (for pictures, book order, etc), send it in a **sealed envelope** in the blue communication folder with your child's name, amount, and reason (what the money is to be used for).

TERMINATION FROM PROGRAM

When a family does not abide by the policies of the Pre-K Program, they will be called for a conference with the principal and Early Childhood Department representatives. At the conference, a plan will be developed to address concerns. If the situation does not improve, your child may be in jeopardy of being excused from the program.

WHAT TO BRING (AND NOT BRING) TO SCHOOL

We need your child to have:

1. An extra set of clothes (underwear, socks, shorts/pants, and shirt)
2. A full size book bag (no wheels)

*If a child's clothes are sent home soiled, please send clean, dry clothes the next day to ensure that your child always has a change of clothes. As the weather changes, be mindful of the clothes you have sent to school. Your teacher will remind you when warmer or cooler clothes are needed.

Your child is welcome to bring and share:

1. A book.
2. An interesting nature item to display. (please be sure it is in a Ziploc bag)
3. Something (arts and crafts) they have made at home.

Please do not allow your child to bring:

1. Toys
2. Due to regulations by the NC Department of Health and Human Services (Child Care Licensure) children are not permitted to bring any animals or rodents to visit classrooms.
3. Candy; outside food/snacks
4. Any type of lotion, hand sanitizer, soap, etc.
5. Balloons
6. Anything in an aerosol container

Please check with your child's teacher before sending anything not assigned or requested.

VISITOR AND VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES

Parents and visitors are expected to stop in the main office and sign in at any time they are visiting or volunteering in the classroom. You will sign in on the computer located by the front door. This includes volunteer time, having lunch with your child, going on a field trip, or attending a conference or meeting. These procedures are critical to maintain the safety of our school and all of the children.

The NC Department of Health and Human Services conducts regular routine sanitation and safety inspections. Any purse, backpack, briefcase, etc. in this building is subject to inspection. Any item found in a purse, backpack, briefcase, etc. and labeled "Keep out of Reach of Children," will result in our Pre-K building being cited for a health code violation and temporarily closed. **Therefore, all visitors will be asked to leave all personal belongings, including purses, backpacks, briefcases, etc. locked in the trunk of their car.** While we understand that this is inconvenient, it is an effort to ensure that all of our students are safe at all times and that your belongings. Please remember to grab your photo ID before locking your belongings in your trunk.

Appendix

Howe Pre-K School Wide Behavior Plan.docx - Google Docs

Summary of the North Carolina Child Care Law for Child Care Centers

New Hanover County Schools Early Childhood Education Program Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma Policy

New Hanover County Board of Education Policies

Lockdown and Shelter in Place Safety Procedures

END OF HANDBOOK