



YoungExplorers
Early Childhood
Program

PARENT HANDBOOK
(Remote Learning)
2020-2021

Connecting Life to Learning!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome Letter	3	Parent Involvement	16
Mission, Vision, and Beliefs	4	Field Trips	16
Program Staff	5	Tuition	17
Calendar	6	Attendance/Absences	18
Remote Learning Description	7	Emergency Closing Information	18
Program Hours	7	Emergency Procedures	18
Early Childhood Program Description	7	Contact Information	18
Instructional Foundations	8	Birthday Celebrations	19
Specials	9	Behavior Expectations	19
Curriculum	10	Special Education Services	20
Technology	10	Referrals	23
YE Activity Grid	11	Student Records	24
Remote Learning Supplies	12	Photographs of Students	25
Sample Remote Learning Schedule	12	Ethics	25
Parent Expectations/Instructional Tips	13	Reporting of Child Abuse & Neglect	26
Jobs	14	Homeless Children	26
Assessment	15	Disclaimer	26
Communication	15		

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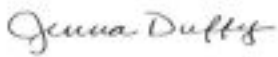
Dear Parent(s),

Welcome to the sixth year of the Young Explorers Early Childhood Program! I think it goes without saying that this year will be like no other. While we all hoped that the start of school would happen under different circumstances, the Young Explorers team will never waiver in our commitment to provide high-quality, early childhood experiences to our students. We have maintained our mission to nurture resilient, inquisitive learners with a strong sense of citizenship and love for learning. Whether you have selected in-person instruction or remote learning, your child will be encouraged every day to explore and develop skills through child-centered experiences that build self-confidence and connections between learning and natural environments.

The Young Explorers community has always been one of shared respect, positive regard, and support between school staff and parents. We want to have a successful, healthy, and safe school year for our students and staff. In order to accomplish this, we need your partnership and support. Please wear masks, wash your hands, maintain physical distance, and follow health and safety guidelines, even when not in school. When completing the self-certification questions at the start of each day, please keep your student home if there is any question regarding his/her health. If you have any questions or concerns about programming, services, or procedures, please reach out to us directly so we may address them. We will remain diligent in following the guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health and will communicate any changes with you as swiftly as possible.

The Young Explorers Parent Handbook will provide you with an overview of our philosophy and commitment to working with young children as well as day-to-day procedures. If you do not find what you need, please do not hesitate to call or email.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenna Duffy".

Jenna Duffy, Ed.D.
Program Director for Young Explorers

DISTRICT 28 MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide a teaching, learning, and caring environment where all children benefit from a commitment to excellence.

YOUNG EXPLORERS MISSION STATEMENT

The Northbrook 28 Early Childhood Program exists to nurture resilient, inquisitive learners with a strong sense of citizenship and love for learning.

YOUNG EXPLORERS VISION STATEMENT

The Northbrook 28 Early Childhood Program seeks to create an engaging learning environment for young children through developmentally appropriate practices aligned to the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards. Our program encourages exploration and skill development through child-centered experiences that build self-confidence and connections between learning and natural environments.

YOUNG EXPLORERS BELIEFS

The Early Childhood Program believes:

- In educating each and every child through facilitating their cognitive, physical, social- emotional, and communicative growth
- Learning should be fostered at each child's developmental level
- Children learn best through active exploration of their natural environment
- Children need a safe and nurturing environment to learn
- Education starts in the home environment
- Parents/Guardians should be active participants in their young child's education
- Children benefit from collaborative home, school, and community partnerships
- In a community that embraces cultural, linguistic, economic, and developmental diversity
- Local communities are valuable resources to support learning

PROGRAM STAFF

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2020-2021 CALENDAR

Always check the calendar dates with the school as dates may change throughout the year.

Month	Date	Event	Session Attendance
August	17	Professional Development Day	NO SCHOOL
	18	Professional Development Day	NO SCHOOL
	19	Remote Learning Tech & Supply Pick-Up/ Professional Development Day	1-3 at District Office
	20	Virtual Meet-n-Greet	Assigned Sessions
	21	New Family Tours	Invitation Only
	24	Professional Development Day	
	25	Young Explorers First Day of School	
September	4	Half-Day of School	PM session attends in the morning
	7	Labor Day	NO SCHOOL
	28	Yom Kippur	NO SCHOOL
October	14	Evening Parent-Teacher Conferences	Full Day of School
	15	Parent-Teacher Conferences- Half-Day of School	AM Session Only
	16	NBJH Teacher Institute Day	NO SCHOOL
November	3	Election Day	NO SCHOOL
	23	Institute Day	NO SCHOOL
	24	Institute Day	NO SCHOOL
	25-28	Thanksgiving Break	NO SCHOOL
December	21	Winter Recess Begins	
January	4	School Reopens	
	15	Half-Day of School	PM session attends in the morning
	18	Martin Luther King's Birthday	NO SCHOOL
February	10	Evening Parent-Teacher Conferences	Full Day of School
	11	Parent-Teacher Conferences- Half-Day of School	AM Session Only
	12	NBJH Teacher Institute Day	NO SCHOOL
	15	President's Day	NO SCHOOL
March	1	Casimir Pulaski Day	NO SCHOOL
	22	Spring Recess Begins	NO SCHOOL
	29	School Reopens	
April	2	Good Friday	NO SCHOOL
May	31	Memorial Day	NO SCHOOL
June	2	Tentative Last Day of School- (Without 10 emergency days)	

REMOTE LEARNING DESCRIPTION

Remote Learning enables schools to provide continuous educational opportunities for all students and is designed for those times where students and educators are unable to learn within the same physical space due to school closures or other circumstances.

Remote Learning is delivered online through a computer or any other digital device. Learning occurs through a blended learning experience using a combination of asynchronous (learning that does not occur at the same time) as well as live interactions (synchronous). Finding a balance between asynchronous and synchronous learning is something that schools have always done, even before the current pandemic. In a more typical classroom experience, synchronous learning provides targeted direct instruction and asynchronous learning allows students flexibility to work at their own pace and in different ways.

Students participating in remote learning will engage in both synchronous and asynchronous activities each school day. Synchronous learning will occur through two separate zoom sessions each day that allow remote learners to join in on the live instruction happening in the classroom. Asynchronous learning will occur with interactive activities provided through Seesaw as well as with student-selected activities provided through the YE Activity Grid.

PROGRAM HOURS

Remote learners can plan their daily schedule around the regular Young Explorers program hours:

Morning: 8:45-11:30 am
Afternoon: 12:30-3:15 pm
Structured Learning: 8:45-3:15 pm

Half-day hours:

8:45-11:30 am
Half-day attendance rotates between the morning and afternoon students. Please refer to the calendar for rotation information.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Young Explorers is located in Westmoor School and consists of five classrooms serving two different programs, Blended and Structured Language & Learning (SLLC). Students are enrolled in Young Explorers through an early childhood screening or through the Early Intervention transition process.

Blended Program: The blended model consists of students who have been identified as typically developing, at-risk, or eligible for special education services. Each blended classroom is staffed by a teacher dually certified in early childhood and special education with an English Language Learner endorsement, as well as a qualified instructional assistant. The staff to student ratio is approximately 1:7. Children enrolled in the Blended program will attend Young Explorers for 2 ¾ hours per day, 5 days per week in the morning (AM) or afternoon (PM) session. The AM session is for children ages 3 to 4 years old. The PM session is only for children who will be attending kindergarten the following school year.

Structured Language & Learning (SLLC or “Structured”): Structured Language & Learning (SLLC) is part of the continuum of supports provided to students ages three through five in the Young Explorers program. Students in the Structured program receive a full-day of intensive, direct instruction in identified areas of need from a certified early childhood special education teacher and speech-language pathologist. Additional supports are provided to SLLC students through specially designed lessons and/or individualized instruction from related services personnel.

INSTRUCTIONAL FOUNDATIONS

Project Approach: The project approach is an element of instruction that complements skills learned through the Creative Curriculum. A project, by definition, is an in-depth topic of study chosen by the students that allows them to apply the skills they have learned in ways that are meaningful to them. Students investigate topics through direct observations, interviewing experts, conducting experiments, and reporting findings. Katz and Chard (1992) stated that, “The inclusion of project work in the curriculum for young children addresses the four major learning goals of all education: the construction and acquisition of worthwhile knowledge, the development of a wide variety of basic intellectual and social skills, strengthening desirable dispositions and engendering positive feelings about themselves as learners and participants in group endeavors” (p. 26).

Environmental Education: Environmental education in early childhood provides students the freedom to discover nature and to build foundational understandings allowing them to connect with their immediate surroundings. As students learn about systems (family, community), local habitats, and the interdependence between nature and people through authentic materials, they become curious about how the world works and are able to apply their learning to broader issues later in life.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM): More than an acronym, STEM represents a philosophy, a way of thinking about how to help students integrate knowledge across disciplines, and encourage them to think in a more connected and authentic way. Research confirms that the brain is particularly receptive to learning math and logic between the ages of 1 and 4. STEM curriculum taps into this natural and innate curiosity about the living world by allowing students to investigate, and by encouraging them to ask questions about the real world. STEM, particularly at the early childhood level, emphasizes the pursuit of intellectual goals and learning by encouraging reasoning, hypothesizing, predicting, understanding, and developing the analysis of ideas.

Service Learning: Service learning is defined as “a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (National Commission on Service-Learning). When students participate in service learning projects and are able to reflect on what they learned, they develop leadership skills, empathy, awareness, social responsibility, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Related Links to this Section

Environmental Education: <http://resources.spaces3.com/c518d93d-d91c-4358-ae5e-b09d493af3f4.pdf>

Project Approach: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED340518.pdf>

Service Learning: <http://learningtogive.org>

STEM: <http://ecrp.illinois.edu/beyond/seed/katz.html>

SPECIALS

Specialists and support service personnel will facilitate weekly, small-group activities within the framework of the pod rotations, that promote the development of cognitive, language, social-emotional, and fine and gross motor skills. The YE staff will try to schedule as many opportunities as possible for remote learners to join specials through zoom.

Language and Literacy (20 min.): As a special facilitated by the speech-language pathologist, Language and Literacy is an instructional pod activity that promotes the development of effective speech, language, and emergent literacy skills. One of the best ways to help preschool children naturally develop language and other emergent reading skills is through the use of children's books. Many books lend themselves to playing with the sounds of language as they are filled with rhymes, alliteration, and predictable patterns. Books are also filled with new vocabulary words and grammatical markers such as nouns, pronouns, adjectives etc. Each week we will read a new book and focus on teaching a specific concept of speech/language. Book reading activities will target a range of age-appropriate skills in the domains of speech and language including: listening comprehension, sequencing, asking and answering a variety of wh-questions (who/what/where), vocabulary knowledge and use, verbal formulation and organization to make requests and comments, and attending to the sounds and symbols of written language.

Caring Community (20 min): Young Explorers will be developing and practicing skills for learning (e.g. focusing attention, listening, following directions, etc.), self-regulation (e.g. waiting for a turn, coping with strong emotions, using self-talk, etc.) and social-emotional functioning (e.g. problem solving, making friends, perspective taking, etc.) through weekly lessons facilitated by the school social worker. The lessons will also incorporate Service Learning, which is a form of experiential education that will integrate meaningful community service with instruction and reflection. Service Learning lessons and projects will incorporate our classroom, local and global communities. Parents and caregivers will also be given resources to practice and reinforce specific skills at home as well as at-home service learning projects.

Motor Magic (20 min.): This special will be facilitated weekly by the occupational therapist. Motor Magic will integrate arts and craft activities to promote development in fine motor, visual motor, and bilateral coordination skills. New fine motor activities will be presented weekly, and may incorporate the themes the students are learning to reinforce key ideas from the lessons.

Outdoor Classroom (30 min): The outdoor classroom consists of three general play spaces: grassy area for free play, playground equipment, and a blacktop area; however, this year, we will not be accessing the playground equipment. Outdoor activities in these spaces will grow and evolve with the needs and interests of the children and our classroom projects. The outdoor classroom fosters children's interest in science, math, and nature, expanding their knowledge of the world around them while also promoting an increase in physical development, capability and activity.

Young Scientists (20 min): Young Scientists is for PM students only. Each week students turn into young scientists as they engage in scientific inquiry, and exploration of the natural world. Scientific inquiry provides the opportunity to explore objects and materials, raise questions, make careful observations, and engage in simple investigations. Students are involved in "sciencing," which describes a hands-on experience that engages them physically and mentally in investigating and manipulating elements in their environment. This scientific environment includes a variety of interesting materials to explore and manipulate, unstructured time to develop and test ideas, and a social climate that tells students that questions and experimentation are as valuable as knowing the right answers.

Yoga: Embedded within natural transitions or rest periods during the day, the children will learn and practice a series of yoga positions to promote body awareness, self-regulation, relaxation and physical and mental health.

CURRICULUM

The Young Explorers program, in following the guidance of the Illinois State Board of Education, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Illinois Department of Public Health, has modified and redesigned our learning environment to prioritize safety procedures for students and staff.

All Young Explorers classrooms will continue to implement *The Creative Curriculum-Fifth Edition* to guide instruction and assess each child to the greatest extent possible. All remote learning activities will follow the same curriculum/unit themes occurring for in-person instruction. This year, each classroom will be designed to include three instructional pods of no more than five students each (for a minimum of two weeks). The classrooms have been laid out so that each pod is 6 feet or more apart and distance among students and staff within each pod will also follow distancing guidelines. Each pod will engage in learning activities led by the classroom teacher, classroom assistant and/or related services specialist. Students will be provided with their own set of individual, sanitized materials at each pod. Additionally, all physical surfaces will be disinfected between rotations.

Pod 1-Direct Instruction: Students will engage in small group learning activities that will focus on the introduction and exploration of new concepts, content and vocabulary related to the current unit of study.

Pod 2-Table Work: This rotation will provide students with the opportunity to learn through hands-on activities designed to deepen their understanding of curricular content while also strengthening foundational skills for following directions, sequencing, and reasoning.

Pod 3-Investigative Play: During guided exploration, investigative play promotes inquiry through experimentation, observation, and manipulation of the materials provided.

TECHNOLOGY

As early childhood educators we understand the balance between a young learner's need for hands-on, play-based learning experiences and the ever-growing integration of technology into our daily school lives. We diligently follow screen time recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics as well as early childhood best practices.

Students will be provided a district-issued iPad and case. The iPads will come with some apps already installed, including:

Zoom: We will be using Zoom to "live-stream" students into the classroom instruction. This provides our remote learners the opportunity to engage in real-time instruction and to engage with same-aged peers. Each student will receive a personalized schedule with their "Zoom-in" times. These times will include a 20-minute direct instruction session as well as one additional 20-minute rotation.

Seesaw: Seesaw is a platform that enhances communication between teachers and students and between teachers and parents. We will be incorporating Seesaw as a supplement to our YE Activity Grid. Through this platform:

1. YE staff will be able to send activities, videos, resources, and feedback to students.
2. Students will be able to capture their learning through many fun, creative ways (including photos, videos, and drawings) and then share their accomplishments directly with the teacher!
3. Teachers and parents will also be able to use Seesaw to communicate about upcoming activities and to share feedback on student learning.

Epic!: Epic! is an app that provides families and classrooms with access to a digital library of over 40,000 books and videos. Designed for children ages twelve and under, Epic! allows the opportunity for remote learning students to access books used in the classroom, to browse through resources about their own interest areas, and to explore new topics in a safe way.

Reference

Dodge, D.T., Colker, L.J., & Heroman, C. (2010). *The creative curriculum for preschool-Fifth edition*. Bethesda, MD: Teaching Strategies, LLC.

YE ACTIVITY GRID

As part of our asynchronous learning, the YE team will create an Activity Grid that includes multiple activity options for each developmental domain: Literacy, Math, Science, Cognitive, Language, Motor Skills (Fine & Gross), Social-Emotional, Art, Music, Cooking. These activities will align to the unit we are learning in the classroom as well as to the activities being completed during Specials. We recommend picking two activities to do each day. You can choose to do different activities each time or even repeat ones that your child loved!

SAMPLE GRID:

Domain	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4
Literacy	Itsy Bitsy Spider Retell	Humpty Dumpty Letter Crack	Fairy Dust Writing	Casting sounds with a Fairy Tale Wand
Math	Hickory Dickory Dock Clock	Jack & The Beanstalk Counting Beans	3 Little Pigs: Huff & Puff Graphing	The Princess & The Pea Patterning
Science	A Bed for Goldilocks	Raft for Billy Goats Gruff	Humpty Dumpty Drop	3 Little Pigs Architectural Challenge
Cognitive	Cinderella’s Shoes	What Is It Mystery Bag	Frozen	Jack and the (Jelly)Bean
Language	Fairy Tale Mad Lib Story	3 Little Pigs Activity	WH Questions with Goldilocks	Mystery Picnic
Motor (Fine & Gross)	Humpty Dumpty puzzle	Paper Roll Beanstalk	Sidewalk Chalk Obstacle Challenge	Fairy Tale Action Cards

Social-Emotional	Turn Taking: Four in a Row	Mindfulness: Red Riding Hood Yoga	Kindness: At Home Kindness Scavenger Hunt	Social Story: People wearing Masks
Art & Music	Shape Castles	Goldilocks Musical Chairs	Fairy Dough	Pinocchio Song & Dance
Cooking	Cooking with kids is always fun! Click the blue link to find some recipes.			

REMOTE LEARNING SUPPLIES

Each remote learner will receive an individual supply kit that provides the materials needed to complete the Activity Grid or to participate in Zoom activities. There will be scheduled supply pick-up times throughout the year.

SAMPLE YE REMOTE LEARNING SCHEDULE

Each student will receive a personalized weekly schedule, including assigned Zoom sessions to support synchronous learning. Here is a sample AM Weekly schedule. The PM schedule would follow a similar format. *Please note: We understand that each family has their own unique needs for scheduling. We ask that your child join the scheduled Zoom sessions; however, any asynchronous activity (Seesaw/Activity Grid) may be completed at a time that works best for you.*

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:45-8:50	Review Daily Schedule	Review Daily Schedule	Review Daily Schedule	Review Daily Schedule	Review Daily Schedule
8:50-8:55					
8:55-9:00	Log onto Zoom	Log onto Zoom	Log onto Zoom	Log onto Zoom	Log onto Zoom
9:00-9:05	Rotation 1 on Zoom	Rotation 1 on Zoom	Rotation 1 on Zoom	Rotation 1 on Zoom	Rotation 1 on Zoom
9:05-9:10					
9:10-9:15					
9:15-9:20	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
9:20-9:25					
9:25-9:30	Rotation 2 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity	Rotation 2 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity	Rotation 2 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity	Rotation 2 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity	Rotation 2 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity
9:30-9:35					
9:35-9:40					
9:40-9:45					
9:45-9:50	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
9:50-9:55					
9:55-10:00					
10:00-10:30	Outdoor Time/Gross Motor Activities				

10:25-10:30	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:30-10:35					
10:35-10:40	Log onto Zoom	Log onto Zoom	Log onto Zoom	Log onto Zoom	Log onto Zoom
10:40-10:45	Rotation 3 on Zoom Language & Literacy	Rotation 3 on Zoom	Rotation 3 on Zoom Caring Community	Rotation 3 on Zoom	Rotation 3 on Zoom
10:45-10:50					
10:50-10:55					
10:55-11:00					
11:00-11:05	Break	Break	Log onto Zoom	Break	Break
11:05-11:10			Rotation 4 on Zoom		
11:10-11:15	Rotation 4 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity	Rotation 4 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity	Motor Magic	Rotation 4 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity	Rotation 4 Activity Grid or Seesaw Activity
11:15-11:20					
11:20-11:25			Break		
11:25-11:30					

PARENT EXPECTATIONS/INSTRUCTIONAL TIPS

Three- through five-year old students have not yet developed the skills to independently navigate instruction and activities. While students will have their own iPad, parents will need to remind them of their schedule, help them log into Zoom and remain physically present to assist with their child remaining engaged in the instruction. Additional activities provided through the YE Activity Grid and Seesaw will require full adult preparation and implementation.

When working with young children, it is important to remember that they learn best by experiencing the world around them in the most natural, play-based way possible. Here are some tips to help you understand the learning process:

- Research is clear that young learners benefit from **repetition**. Doing the same activity over and over helps form connections between those billions of neurons they are born with in their brains! Even more importantly, as children continue to repeat activities and notice that they are doing something well, their confidence and perseverance also grow!
- There are general guidelines for how long young learners can **sustain attention**; however, a number of variables have an impact on their focus including task difficulty, interest level and motivation, and the number of distractions in the environment. Most experts suggest that the following are the longest a child can sustain productive attention:
 - 3-year old: 6-10 minutes (even when the interest level is high and the difficulty level is low)
 - 4-year old: 8-12 minutes
 - 5-year old: 10-15 minutes

If you're noticing behaviors emerge during an activity you're doing with your child, think about how long it's been, and how hard the task might be for them in order to gauge whether it's time to shift to something else.

- **Mistakes** can be used as opportunities to learn! While it may sound cliché, letting children work through a problem or a situation they can't resolve right away builds resilience, encourages healthy risk taking, and develops important problem solving strategies that contribute to future learning. If your child is struggling with a challenge in play, let them manipulate the play and apply trial and error to the situation before jumping in to help. Instead of telling them how to solve the problem, let them know what you notice. Making a comment such as, "I notice that the block on this side is shorter than the other side," will give them more information and clues as to why the building may be falling down, and allow them support in figuring out the solution for themselves.
- When a child has mastery of a skill or play scheme, or has repeated the same play several times, you may take that opportunity to scaffold their learning into a higher level of thinking and play. **Scaffolding** allows a child to solve a problem or carry out a task that is just beyond his/her current level of ability. Scaffolding involves modeling, giving clues, and asking questions when a child is trying out a new skill, and then pulling back that support as they develop more independence. Key questions to help move children to that next level of thinking might include:
 - What else is possible here/what else could we do?
 - What happens when we add or do this?
 - What are you noticing?
 - What does that remind you of?

Open ended, thoughtful questions can provoke and encourage children's thinking, and take them to the next level of learning and play.

- Common or generic praise may have the effect of decreasing, rather than increasing, motivation and positive behavior. Mindful and **meaningful praise**, in contrast, is specific, and recognizes effort as opposed to product. While it seems obvious, it's not always easy. Instead of saying "good job," include a specific comment about what it is that you're impressed with, what behavior specifically was "good." Instead of saying "you did it," praise the effort it took to do/complete the activity. Even in cases where success wasn't achieved, praising the effort encourages persistence, and communicates the message that the "trying" has value.

JOBS

Classroom jobs are announced at the beginning of the day during our Opening Meeting. Giving young students jobs is a great way to teach responsibility and to enforce the concept that all people, no matter how young, can provide meaningful contributions to their environment.

Returning YE students are familiar with Energy Saver and Room Inspector; however, we have added some other ideas that you can do with them at home. They can have the same job all week or you can give them the opportunity to pick a new one each day!

Energy Saver- Help turn lights on and off in the house. It's always important to conserve energy!

Room Inspector- Check a room or space after an activity and put things away if they are out of place.

Botanist- Help water and care for a plant in the home.

Pet Feeder- If you have a family pet, help take care of their feeding needs.

Meteorologist- Check the weather! What does it look like outside? Is it cold, hot, chilly, or warm? What should we wear? Make observations and record it. (*You can also help your child report to their teacher with a Seesaw drawing if they have chosen this job today!*)

Table Helper- Help set the table before meals and help clean up after.

Laundry Leader- Help with the laundry- match socks, sort clothing by person, fold small towels, etc.

ASSESSMENT

All Young Explorers families will receive two formal progress reports each year in November and June, as well as a midterm update provided in March. Student response to instruction will be monitored through Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG). TSG is an on-going classroom performance assessment aligned with the Creative Curriculum and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards. Data collection methods include, observation notes, work samples, skill checklists, and parent input.

Three times per year, students attending Young Explorers in the afternoon, will participate in benchmark assessments in the areas of early literacy and numeracy through aimswebPlus. aimswebPlus contains a set of preschool assessments for monitoring the growth and development of children. As part of a multi-tiered model of supports within early childhood, aimswebPlus benchmarking results help to inform decisions about whether children are demonstrating adequate levels of performance given the general level of instruction, or if their performance indicates a need for more intense levels of instruction.

Related Links to this Section

Creative Curriculum Gold: <http://www.creativecurriculum.net>

aimswebPlus: <https://www.pearsonassessments.com>

COMMUNICATION

Weekly Communication

Each week you will receive a classroom newsletter from your child's teacher and program staff. This year we will be using an on-line format. If you do not have access to a computer or email account, please let us know and we will make sure you receive a paper copy. Newsletter information may contain: information about featured projects and activities, upcoming events, important date reminders, weekly updates from our specials staff, and more.

Emails

Email is a fast and efficient way to contact a teacher directly. Please feel free to email staff members with any questions or concerns. Please keep in mind that teachers may not be able to respond immediately and may require up to 24 hours to generate a response.

Phone Calls

All program staff have a voicemail extension listed in the front of this handbook. If you would like to leave a voicemail or message with the office, staff will respond within 24 hours of your call. Please remember that staff will not take phone calls while they are teaching. If you have an emergency, please tell the office staff and the information will be given promptly to the teacher.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Young Explorers families will have the opportunity to participate in parent-teacher conferences twice a year (October and February). This is an opportunity for parents to meet with staff to discuss the progress and growth of their child.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

Parents are welcome to schedule informal meetings with staff members, as they deem necessary. Please contact staff with the purpose of the meeting and when you are available. Staff will make arrangements for the meeting in a timely manner.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Young Explorers believes that parent and family participation in education is crucial to the success of our students. Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, parent volunteers and/or visitors are not allowed in the school building this year. We are working on new ideas for parent involvement in the school day.

Parent Volunteers

Even though we are unable to host parent volunteers in the classroom due to current health and safety guidelines, we are working on creative ways that parents can be directly involved in classroom activities and the Young Explorers community.

The “Mystery Explorer” is an all-time favorite for our students. For this year, a parent or family member may choose a book related to the current theme and can record themselves reading their book of choice or participate in a live read aloud via zoom. The Young Explorers staff will help you plan your session.

The “Expert Explorer” is a valuable resource for our students. This year, depending on our unit of study, teachers may reach out to parents or vice versa to share in depth knowledge and field experiences via Zoom. For example, in a Health and Safety unit, we would invite parents who are healthcare professionals to share their experiences and also allow for students a chance to interview the experts. These opportunities provide students with real-world connections to the information learned at school.

The “Parent Mentor” has been equally rewarding for our “veteran” parents and our incoming families. We pair an incoming Young Explorers family with a returning family, or a family that has been part of the program from the beginning of the year. The “mentor” assists with questions and resources the incoming family may have about community resources (example: Where do local families take swim lessons? Which local parks are appropriate for 3-5 year olds?) and program questions from a parent perspective (example: What are parent/teacher conferences like? How do you use shutterfly to see pictures?).

FIELD TRIPS and FEES

Due to current Illinois State Board of Education guidelines to ensure the safety of our students, we are not currently able to offer off-site field trips. In order to provide students with connections between classroom learning and life experiences, the Young Explorers staff will be investigating the possibility of other creative opportunities, such as virtual field trips, to promote exposure to experiences outside of the classroom setting.

TUITION

Only children who are enrolled in the Typically Developing category of the Young Explorers Program are required to pay tuition.

Tuition Fees (2020-2021):

In-Person Instruction: \$4250 for the school year

Remote Learning: \$3187 for the school year

In the event of a school closure, the in-person tuition fee will be prorated to the remote learning rate.

Tuition Due Date

Tuition payments are made in 9 equal payments from September to May, payable at the start of each month. You will receive an emailed invoice each month.

Payment Options

Payment options include RevTrak (the secure online web store), cash, or check. Checks should be made out to Northbrook School District 28. Please make sure to include your child's name on the check. You will also be offered the option to allow us to automatically charge your credit card each month. A signed authorization form is required.

Refunds

The Young Explorers Program will not issue refunds when a child is absent from school. However, a prorated refund will be provided to any family withdrawing their child from the paid early childhood program. Parents must provide two weeks notice in advance of withdrawing their child from the program. Refunds will be provided within two months from the date the program receives notification of the withdrawal.

Dismissal Due to Absences

Students enrolled in the Typically Developing category who will be absent for 11 or more consecutive school days without a doctor's note, will be removed from the program and put on a waiting list for re-entry into the program. Exceptions will be made for students who are required to quarantine per CDC and IDPH guidelines. Parents/guardians do have the option to continue paying tuition up to 20 consecutive school days during a child's absence to hold his/her spot.

Dismissal Due to a Lack of Payment

Students enrolled in the Typically Developing category whose tuition has not been received by the 15th of the month (e.g. April 15), or the next business day if the 15th falls on a weekend or holiday will be removed from the program on the 16th day of the month. However, if the 16th day falls on a weekend, the student will be removed from the program on the next scheduled school day. The next student on the wait list will then fill that student's spot.

ATTENDANCE/ABSENCES

Attendance will be taken by your child's participation in our daily zoom sessions.

If your child is sick or going to be absent from participating in remote learning, please contact your child's teacher and Westmoor office staff by 9:00 a.m. You may report your child's absence by either:

- Calling the attendance line: 847.498.7960 or by
- Emailing wmattendance@northbrook28.net

Please provide your child's name, teacher's name, reason for the absence and length of absence if known. After hours when the office is closed, you may call the school and leave information about an absence on voicemail or email.

If your child rides the bus and will not be attending school, please contact the bus company (First Student) at 847-724-7200.

EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION

If it becomes necessary to close school because of adverse weather conditions or other emergencies (i.e. power failure), the District will utilize an automated telephone notification system to send out a mass phone message to families. This phone call will also be followed by an email alert. Please be sure to inform the Administrative Assistant for Early Childhood if your phone number or email address has changed to ensure you receive these important alerts. The District will also update its website including the Northbrook 28 Facebook page.

You may listen to radio stations WGN 720 (AM) or WBBM 780 (AM) or watch local TV stations for updates or access closing information online at <http://www.emergencyclosings.com> or the District 28 website (<http://www.northbrook28.net>).

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Family Crisis

If a crisis is affecting your child's ability to learn, please advise your child's teacher or administrator. If necessary, staff members who directly interact with your child will be informed of the situation. In addition, with your permission, staff will investigate available support services. Any information pertaining to these matters will be kept strictly confidential.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Class Directory

Each classroom teacher will compile and distribute a directory of student names and contact information for the class. Due to rolling enrollment, class directories will be frequently updated throughout the year. Full program directories will be distributed in August, November, and February.

Change of Information

It is very important that the school maintains an up-to-date street address, e-mail address and phone numbers (home, cell and work). This information is critical in emergencies, for canceling school due to snow, or for an early or late dismissal. Notify the school immediately with a change in any contact information during the school year.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthday Celebrations

The Young Explorers program chooses to celebrate birthdays in a fun, healthy way. We would love to celebrate your child's birthday at school by inviting a family member to join the classroom via zoom to read a favorite story to the class and join us in singing Happy Birthday!

No gifts, treats or goodie bags will be permitted to support our community's medical needs and to support families who are experiencing financial stress.

Birthday arrangements should be made with your child's classroom teacher in advance.

Birthday Party Invitations

School staff members are not permitted to distribute birthday party invitations. Please utilize the program directory to mail birthday party invitations home.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Participation in Zoom Guidelines:

- Log in at the start time for your child's session
- Help your child maintain physical presence in the Zoom session
- Remind your child to raise their hand when they want to share or ask a question
- Support your child in completing activities along with their peers
- It is okay to leave the Zoom session if your child becomes upset or has difficulty remaining engaged and you cannot encourage them back to the activity.

The Creative Curriculum teaches that every classroom is a community where children learn self-discipline and social competence through positive relationships. In this community, people feel safe, help one another, and see themselves as part of a group. Social competence is taught by "helping children understand how to treat people and how they want to be treated by others; to acquire the skills to cooperate, negotiate, and make and keep friends; and to resolve problems and conflicts" (Dodge, Colker, & Heroman, 2002, p. 102).

All program staff are responsible for helping children understand how to treat people and how they want to be treated by others through building relationships with each child by:

- Getting to know each child's unique qualities;

- Talking to each child respectfully;
- Being sensitive to children's feelings; and
- Validating children's accomplishments and progress.

In addition to the above guidelines provided by *The Creative Curriculum*, all program staff must abide by the ethical guidelines set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (please see page 25 for more information).

Second Step Early Learning Curriculum: The Second Step early learning program uses a research-based approach to enhance students' self-regulation and social-emotional functioning, which are important for school readiness, as well as social and life success (Committee for Children, 2011). The program focuses on teaching students skills related to learning, having empathy, managing emotions, building friendships, and solving problems. Skills are introduced and practiced through many modes, such as puppet shows, stories, role-playing, singing, and group activities. Parents are also provided ideas on how they can support and continue the learning at home.

Resources Related to this Section

Creative Curriculum: <http://www.teachingstrategies.com/page/teaching-strategies-system-for-preschool.cfm>

Second Step: http://www.cfchildren.org/Portals/0/SS_EL/EL_DOC/EL_Visual_Research_SS.pdf

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Remote learners receiving special education supports will receive a service schedule at the start of the school year. Our goal is to provide the majority of services through live, synchronous sessions as much as possible. This may include direct interaction with a dually-certified classroom teacher or related service provider via Zoom sessions during Rotations or Specials throughout the school day. Any services or goal work that can not be completed through synchronous learning will be addressed through asynchronous activities aligned to the intervention needs of the student.

The Young Explorers Early Childhood Program provides a full continuum of services to children ages 3 through 5 who have been found eligible for special education. All staff work collaboratively to support students with a team approach in the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate to meet the child's educational needs. In addition to our dually certified Early Childhood/Special Education teachers, our program provides the following related services to students who have been found eligible in these areas:

Health Services:

School nurses support students who have been identified as having medical needs that impact their learning. They conduct hearing and vision screenings, develop and monitor Individual Health Plans (IHP), as well as oversee and administer medications (with parent and physician approval) within the school setting. In addition to these student services, school nurses coordinate health services and provide consultation and training to administration, staff, and parents regarding topics such as diabetes, allergies, and asthma.

Social Work Services (SW):

School social workers support students who have been identified as having needs in the areas of social skills and emotional functioning. They work with students to help them better understand themselves and others, improve their interpersonal skills, better cope with emotions, and improve their problem-solving skills. School social workers also work closely with parents and the community to identify resources, to minimize the impact of environmental factors on learning, to increase disability and diversity awareness, and to help clarify school policies and procedures.

Speech and Language Therapy (SL):

The speech-language pathologist supports all students enrolled in the Young Explorers program by participation in the screening, evaluation and assessment of students with potential or previously identified speech or language needs; the planning, implementing and monitoring of intervention for students who may be at risk for speech or language deficits; and the provision of direct services, both within and outside of the classroom, for students with identified social, expressive, receptive language needs and/or articulation or phonology weaknesses, including early literacy development. As a member of the early childhood team, the speech-language pathologist is a part of curriculum design, planning and implementation to ensure every child's communication development is fostered and supported.

Psychological Services:

School psychologists are trained in both psychology and education, and support student development in the classroom through assisting with the implementation of interventions, modeling strategies, and/or leading whole group activities. In addition, in order to help identify student need, the psychologist participates in student screenings, case study evaluations and assessments, and the development of special education plans and support. At a program level, the psychologists further supports student growth through consultation and training with staff, curriculum planning, and collaboration with administrators and parents.

Occupational Therapy (OT):

School-based occupational therapists support students who have been identified as having needs in the areas of self-care (eating, dressing, toileting); manipulating toys, games, or equipment; physically completing writing tasks; visual processing; and regulation of their sensory system that impacts their performance during the school day. Occupational therapists also provide consultation and training to administration, staff, and parents regarding topics such as at-home activities to enhance skill development, the impact of sensory processing difficulties on learning and behavior, and evidence-based interventions to support fine-motor, visual processing, and sensory development.

Physical Therapy (PT):

School-based physical therapists support students who have been identified as having needs in the areas of mobility, strength, and physical safety that impact their ability to play and interact with peers in the classroom and to safely navigate the school environment and playground. Physical therapists also provide consultation and training to administration, staff, and parents regarding topics such as locating resources, body mechanics, handling techniques, classroom/school environment adaptations, the use of adaptive equipment, and the impact of gross motor difficulties on educational performance..

Structured Language & Learning (SLLC or “Structured”):

Structured Language & Learning (SLLC) is part of the continuum of supports provided to students ages three through five in the Young Explorers program. Students in the Structured program receive a full-day of intensive, direct instruction in identified areas of need from a certified early childhood special education teacher and speech-language pathologist. Additional supports are provided to SLLC students through specially designed lessons and/or individualized instruction from related services personnel.

North Suburban Special Education District (NSSSED) is a special education cooperative that also provides related services to students in the Young Explorers program. These services include:

Assistive Technology (AT) Services:

The assistive technology specialist supports students who are unable to express needs and wants through a range of low tech to high tech devices. These devices could include schedules, use of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), and interactive whiteboards. In addition, the assistive technology specialist provides consultation and training to administration, staff, parents, and students regarding topics such as implementing communication technology at home and training on assistive technology devices.

Audiological (Aud.) Services:

Audiologists conduct evaluations to determine the presence, range, nature and degree of hearing loss. Audiologists identify personal hearing instruments and/or any other assistive technology that will assist children’s hearing in the school environment. In addition, audiologists provide consultation and training to children, staff, and parents regarding hearing loss, prevention programs, and classroom acoustics.

Hearing Itinerant (HI) Services:

Hearing itinerants support students with hearing difficulties within their individual school setting. Hearing itinerants work directly with students to support language instruction, auditory skill development, and adjustment to the learning environment. Hearing itinerants also provide consultation and training to administration, staff, parents, and students regarding assistive listening technology supports, accommodations for students with hearing loss, and potential impacts of hearing loss on learning and socialization.

Vision Itinerant (VI) Services:

Vision itinerants support students with vision difficulties within their individual school setting. Vision itinerants work directly with students to support their ability to retrieve instruction and demonstrate their knowledge. These supports could include: visual training, accommodations to the classroom or school environment, and/or modifications to instructional materials. Vision itinerants also provide consultation and training to administration, staff, parents, and students regarding appropriate supports for vision difficulties within the school environment and the impacts of vision loss on learning and socialization.

Procedural Safeguards for Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities:

State and federal laws protect the rights of parents/guardians of a student with a disability who is eligible to receive or is receiving special education and related services. The Illinois State Board of Education

(ISBE) has compiled a document explaining these rights entitled, *Procedural Safeguards for Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities*. Staff often refer to this document as “Parent Rights.” Parents/Guardians must be given written documentation of these rights no less than once per year or when requested.

Parent Role In Special Education:

Parents are an invaluable resource to a child’s education and should be actively involved in all decisions regarding their child’s educational programming. Parents can be active participants by:

- Staying informed about special education supports and services available in the program;
- Locating supportive resources within the school and community;
- Learning about your child’s disability and its on impact on his/her development;
- Helping staff better understand your child’s strengths and weaknesses as well as your hopes/goals for your child’s education;
- Learning about special education procedures and your/your child’s legal rights;
- Attending and participating in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings;
- Maintaining open communication with staff regarding concerns, celebrations, or any significant life changes that could impact your child’s education;
- Asking questions;
- Working collaboratively with staff;
- Supporting learning with activities at home; and
- Most importantly, by supporting and celebrating your child’s successes!

Resources Related to this Section

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA): <http://www.aota.org>
American Physical Therapy Association (APTA): <http://www.pediatricapta.org>
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA): <http://www.asha.org>
Assistive Technology: <http://www.iltech.org>
Illinois Association of School Social Workers (IASSW): <http://www.iassw.org>
Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE): <http://www.isbe.state.il.us>
Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA): <http://idea.ed.gov/>
National Association of School Nurses (NASN): <http://www.nasn.org>
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP): <http://www.nasponline.org>
North Suburban Special Education District (NSSSED): <http://www.nsssed.org>
Procedural Safeguards: https://www.isbe.net/Documents/nc_proc_sfgdrds_34-57j.pdf

REFERRALS

If you have a concern regarding your child, you should first contact your child’s classroom teacher. Your child’s classroom teacher will work directly with you to brainstorm possible supports. Based upon the frequency or severity of the concern, the teacher may also refer your child to the program’s Intervention Team (IT) to develop a more comprehensive intervention plan.

As a parent you also have the right to submit a request for an evaluation to determine whether or not your child is eligible for special education services. This request may be made orally, in written format, or

electronically to any District 28 employee. Upon receiving your request, a staff member will contact you to clarify your concerns and gather information. The staff will then review any available data or collect more data to consider whether or not an evaluation is warranted. According to Illinois State law, the team must decide whether or not an evaluation is warranted and inform you of their decision within 14 school days of your request.

STUDENT RECORDS

The information contained in school student records is considered confidential. The District will keep record information current, accurate, clear, and relevant. Typically, there are two types of student records: Permanent and Temporary (see definitions below). Federal and state laws allow parents/guardians and students the right to inspect, copy, and challenge school records. Please direct any questions or review of student records requests to:

Karen Hanusiak, Administrative Assistant for Student Services, 847.504.3409

Definition of Permanent Student Records

These records are maintained by the district and typically include the following types of information:

- Basic identifying information (name, birthdate and place, address, gender, and parent/guardian names and addresses);
- Academic transcripts and records;
- Attendance; and
- Accident and health records.

Definition of Temporary Student Records

These records are maintained by school buildings and personnel and typically include any information not in a permanent record. This information can include but is not limited to:

- Test scores (intelligence and achievement);
- Psychological evaluations;
- Participation in extracurricular activities and/or school-sponsored clubs/organizations;
- Teacher anecdotal records;
- Discipline record; and
- Special education files/records.

Destruction of Records

According to state law, parents/guardians will receive written notification regarding the destruction of permanent or temporary school records. Parents/guardians/students may request a copy of school records prior to destruction or upon the graduation, withdrawal, or transfer of the student from the district.

Resources Related to this Section

Illinois School Student Records Act: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=1006&ChapterID=17>
Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

PHOTOGRAPHS OF STUDENTS

Throughout the year, photos and/or videos of District 28 students are included in District publications, on the District's website and cable television channel, and on District administered social media websites. Images or videos of students engaged in school activities may be used in electronic, video, or printed form. From time to time, news and other organizations may include photos and videos of students in their publications and on their television stations and/or websites. Occasionally, news outlets may publish students' first and last names. If you do not want your child to be featured in these types of pieces, please notify the Superintendent or Communications Coordinator of District 28 in writing by the first day of school.

ETHICS

In the field of early childhood education, it is very important for all program staff to establish common guidelines for responsible decision-making and behavior. All staff associated with the Young Explorers Early Childhood Program have adopted the ethical guidelines set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). At the start of each school year, all program staff members review the *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment* (see link below) and sign a document indicating their agreement to conduct themselves in accordance with these guidelines. The following *Statement of Commitment* represents program staff's recognition of and dedication to the core values of early childhood education.

Statement of Commitment

"As an individual who works with young children, I commit myself to furthering the values of early childhood education as they are reflected in the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. To the best of my ability I will

- Never harm children.
- Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge and research of child development and early childhood education.
- Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children.
- Respect colleagues in early childhood care and education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Serve as an advocate for children, their families, and their teachers in community and society.
- Stay informed of and maintain high standards of professional conduct.
- Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families.
- Be open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others.
- Continue to learn, grow, and contribute as a professional.
- Honor the ideals and principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct."

* This Statement of Commitment is not part of the Code but is a personal acknowledgment of the individual's willingness to embrace the distinctive values and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education. It is recognition of the moral obligations that lead to an individual becoming part of the profession."

(National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2005)

Resources Related to this Section

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct: <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSETH05.pdf>

REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

According to Illinois School Code, all District employees are required to immediately report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). In addition, all District employees are required to immediately report the discovery of any child pornography on electronic and information technology. All District employees, upon being hired, receive training regarding the signs of child abuse and neglect and sign the *Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status* form provided by DCFS. Signed forms are kept in the Human Resources department.

Resources Related to this Section

NAEYC Code of Conduct: http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/ethical_conduct

Abused & Neglected Child Reporting Act: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=1460&ChapterID=32>

HOMELESS CHILDREN

Any homeless child who is not currently eligible for special education services will be immediately screened for the Young Explorers Program, even if the child's parents/guardians are unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. The District will follow all procedures dictated in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Illinois State law. Any further information or questions should be directed to District 28's Liaison for Homeless Children: Kelly Sculles, Director of Student Services, 847.504.3405.

Resources Related to this Section

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/McKinney.pdf>

DISCLAIMER

The 2020-21 Parent Handbook for the Young Explorers Early Childhood Program is a summary of information, as well as procedures and policies governing District 28. The complete set of Board policies may be accessed on the District website or is available upon request at the District Office (1475 Maple Avenue, Northbrook).

This handbook may be amended during the school year without notice if the Board and/or Administration determine that a change in policies, practices, or procedures is warranted.