

Menifee County Schools

Preschool



Parent Handbook

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Meniffee County Preschool MISSION STATEMENT

The Meniffee County Preschool at the Botts Early Learning Center is committed to providing a child-centered learning environment with high expectations for all.

Our BELIEF STATEMENT

The Meniffee County School Preschool staff believe:

...that teaching must focus on the whole child and must involve families in the educational process.

...that when designing instruction and services, we must ensure that all programs are developmentally appropriate, collaborative and inclusive for all children.

...that instruction is engaging, meaningful and challenging.

...that individualization is necessary for all students.

...that our curriculum and instruction design must be innovative and research based.

...that arts and humanities are an essential part of each child's education.

...that high expectations must be held for staff, students and families.

...that we must provide a compassionate, caring, and inviting environment for our children and their families.

...that effective communication is essential among teachers, support staff, families and the community.

...that success is dependent on fostering meaningful relationships with children, families, our community, the district and local universities and colleges.

GENERAL INFORMATION

A Description of Programs Offered

State-Funded Preschool (ages 3 and 4)

This program serves 3 and 4-year-old children with a diagnosed disability that have an IEP or children who are 4 years old by August 1, 2025 and meet the income eligibility guidelines.

Screenings

Families with concerns about a child's development may request a free developmental screening at the Botts Early Learning Center at 6882 US-460, Denniston, KY 40316 or call (606)768-8052 for an appointment.

Tuition-Based Preschool (ages 3 and 4)

The tuition-based Preschool Program is for 3 and 4-year-old children. This program offers preschool for students who are over the income eligibility. Tuition will be charged according to a schedule recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the Board, for a limited number of preschool students who are not otherwise eligible for preschool.

If your child qualifies for a tuition spot, payments will be due on the first of each month. You will have a grace period until the 8th of the month to make your payment. If we have not received your payment by this date, services may be suspended until payment is made. If you need to make special payment arrangements, call the Director of Personalized Learning at (606)768-8002.

Head Start

Federally funded, the Head Start Program serves children from low-income families who meet eligibility guidelines. Contact Gateway Head Start at Botts Early Learning Center for further information.

Days and Times for Preschool

Menifee County Preschool will follow the Menifee County Public School calendar except for the first and last day of school. The first day for preschool students will be August 26, 2024 and last day will be May 8, 2025 (subject to change if K-12 students last day changes). Preschool students will be in session Monday-Thursday. There is no preschool class on Friday. Friday is used for lesson planning, staff training, and home visits throughout the year.

Times

The preschool program runs Monday through Thursday following the Menifee County School Calendar. The school days will follow the same hours set for Menifee K-12 schools. Please refer to the school calendar for additional days off.

Attendance

We love having your child here at school. Please help us improve your child's academic performance and our school attendance by sending your child to school on days they are well and limiting the number of late arrivals and early dismissals.

Your child's regular attendance is necessary for a rich learning experience. Please notify your child's teacher (prior to/or following preschool instructional time) if your child will be absent. A parent note or doctor's excuse must be turned in upon returning to preschool. Attendance records for preschool are kept just as they are in K-12. Any absence, tardy, check-in or check-out is considered an event. If a preschool child exhibits a pattern of consistent events, the Administrator or Family Resource Coordinator reserves the right to discuss continued enrollment with the parent/caregiver. They may also discuss any problems or concerns that are making it difficult for your student to attend consistently. Please note a home visit may be conducted if we cannot contact you by phone. If there are 6 or more events that are unexcused, DPP may contact the family.

The program expects your child to arrive at school on time consistently every day. For late arrivals, you must sign in through the school/center office. When your child is tardy (15 minutes after the start of class), valuable instruction time is missed. If students accumulate six (6) tardies, you will be contacted in order to identify and assist in trying

to get your child to school on time for his/her benefit. Chronic tardiness of fifteen (15) or more instances may lead to children being excluded from the program.

Visitors

All visitors to Meniffee Early Learning Center must check-in at the front office and will receive a visitor sticker. You are asked to sign in and sign out any time you are on school grounds. All parent volunteers will be asked to attend training and to wear a badge while in the building. This is for the protection of our students. When a student is checked out from school by an adult listed on the student pickup list, the adult will be asked to sign them out. **All visitors are asked to exit out the front doors only. The front office MUST keep track of all visitors entering and exiting our building.**

Required Documents

The following documents must be current and on file before your child can attend school:

- Copy of a Certified Birth Certificate (no hospital copy)
- Up-to-date Kentucky Immunization Certificate which includes the Hepatitis A series, the Hepatitis B series, and Varicella (Chicken Pox) vaccine
- Physical examination on the Kentucky Form
- Eye examination performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist and recorded on the required state form

Emergency Information

At the beginning of the year you will be asked to fill out a student authorization form to provide your child's teacher with names and phone numbers of adults who can be contacted in the event of an emergency. This form will also need the names of any adult who can sign your child out. It is very important that every child maintain an up-to-date address and telephone number. Notify the school immediately if you have a change of address or telephone number during the school year. In addition, any changes to who can and cannot receive your child must be updated for your child's safety. You will need to come to the office to change the information for your child. Identification will be required for any individual picking up a student.

Dress Code and Recess

We recommend that all children wear play clothes that are washable and comfortable. In addition, we recommend that children wear proper footwear (**NO FLIP FLOPS**) in order to fully participate in daily recess. Adequate rain and snow wear is recommended. Hats and mittens in winter are a must since we take children outside regularly.

Backpacks and Folders



Every child needs to bring a backpack to school every day. We ask that backpacks be regular size, without wheels or drawstrings. Inside the backpack, we are asking families to place a change of clothes in a Ziploc bag. This should include a shirt, pants, underwear and socks. Even if your child does not normally have accidents, it is important to have the change of clothes in case of other emergencies. (Your child spills a drink or gets sick, etc.) Your child's teacher may take these out of the backpack, or choose to leave them. If they are stored in the classroom, they will be returned at the end of the school year.

Please make sure that your child's binder/folder is in their backpack every day. This binder/folder will be used to give you any and all papers that will need your attention. Weekly newsletters, letters about activities that are school based, etc. will all be placed in this notebook. In addition, a pencil pouch will be included in the binder. This pouch can be used to transport notes, money etc. so that they do not get lost in the bottom of your child's backpack. Please be sure to check your child's binder daily for important information, paperwork, permission slips, etc.

Money

If you are sending in money with your child for field trips, book orders, etc., please place the money in an envelope with your child's name, the amount and its intended purpose. Place the envelope in your child's zipper pouch located in their folder. This allows us to make certain all money is accounted for in a more organized manner.

Meals

Please be aware that meals are now free for all Menifee County Schools including Preschool students. This will allow all students, regardless of income, to receive school meals free of charge. If your child wants to bring their lunch, and chooses to get 3 or more items to supplement their meal, those items will be free.

Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy or has dietary restrictions, please let the teacher know immediately. In order to provide a different food choice an eating/feeding evaluation form must be completed by your child's physician and turned in to the teacher who will work with the cafeteria manager to meet the nutritional needs of your child. The teacher will also alert the class team and nurse of any possible allergic reactions.

Health/Medication

The school assumes that families will not send a child to school if he shows any signs of illness, such as: red throat, excessive cough, skin rash, and fever above 100 degrees, vomiting, or frequent diarrhea during the night. We ask, for your child's sake and for the protection of other children, that your child be kept at home under these conditions.

Children should be fever free for 24 hours without medication, before returning to school. If any of these symptoms occur at school, families will be notified. Other communicable diseases for which your child needs to be kept home include: head lice, pink eye, chicken pox, scabies, pinworms, ringworms and impetigo. For the previous list, a physician's note or health department release is required for your child to return to school, with the exception of chicken pox, in which your child must be scab-free to return.

We are unable to dispense medications of any kind (including cough drops) in the classroom. **If your child is taking a prescription drug and must receive a dose during school hours, families must make arrangements with the school nurse and fill out a medical permission slip to be signed by the doctor and family for each individual medication.** A form must be completed for over-the-counter medications as well (such as Benadryl, Neosporin etc.). An adult must bring the medication to school. **Medicines cannot be sent to school on the bus, or in backpacks.**

Items from Home

Young children have a difficult time sharing their own toys. Because of this, we request that children do not bring toys from home to school. We will provide your child with a variety of educational toys. Please check your child's backpack regularly to ensure that your child is only bringing school related items to school. There may be occasions in which children are allowed to share a favorite item. If your child is asked to bring/share

something, please remind them that their item needs to stay in their backpack and toy guns and toy knives are not appropriate for school. We cannot be responsible for broken or lost toys.

Calendar and School Cancellation

The Preschool at Botts Early Learning Center operates on the same school calendar as Menifee County Schools except for the first and last day of school. (See school calendar enclosed.) Classes will be canceled in the event of severe weather as decided by the school superintendent. Families should listen to local radio/TV stations for cancellation announcements. School closing information can also be found at the Menifee County Schools website www.menifee.kyschools.us.

In the event that school must release early due to weather, you will receive a call via the "One Call" system – this is in addition to the news, radio, and website postings. In order to reduce the number of days missed due to snow and inclement weather. The School District may implement the use of NTI Days for inclement weather.

NTI Non-Traditional Instruction Days

The Menifee County School District will be implementing a plan for Non-Traditional Instructional days for up to 10 snow/cold weather days. We are thrilled to have this opportunity again this year to continue your child's learning, even when weather prevents us from safely traveling to school! Preschool families will receive a packet of engaging activities for you and your child to complete on this day. There are enough activities to involve your child for an adequate amount of time while still enjoying the fun of a snow days. When school is back in session, your child will return a form in order to document your child's participation. Teachers will be available these days through email and other means.

Celebrations/Parties



We will have different celebrations and parties throughout the year. They will mostly revolve around themes that we will teach. We will ask families to help with these events, either by attending or by sending in things for the celebration. We will include notice of these celebrations in our weekly newsletter.

For your child's birthday, you are welcome to send in a store bought, individually wrapped treat for your child to share with their friends. Be sure to communicate with

teachers at least a day prior to sending in treats so that teachers can plan accordingly. Please be sure to check with your child's teacher to find out about possible food allergies and the number of students in the class before sending items in.

Please be aware that if you choose to send invitations to your child's birthday party, we ask that you send an invitation for every child.

Student Privacy Rights

The Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits school districts to release "Directory Information" to certain people or institutions, such as the news media, unless the child's family or guardian requests that such information not be released. "Directory Information" includes the following:

- Student name, address, phone number, date of birth, school email address, photograph/picture
- Current school and grade level attended by the student
- Dates of Attendance
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of athletic team members
- Honors and awards received

The Kentucky Department of Education will not release student information for commercial or other purposes. The purpose of a release will always be related to the conduct of school business.

You will receive a form in your child's first of year packet regarding your student's privacy rights. Please read this carefully. If you do **NOT** want us to release "Directory Information" and/or publish your child's photograph, and/or release videotape of your child, please complete and return the form to the school. Family/student should retain a copy. OTHERWISE, IT IS **NOT** NECESSARY TO TAKE ANY ACTION.

TRANSPORTATION

Families will provide transportation for their child to and from school each day.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Family Fun Nights

Our school family organizes regular Family Fun Nights. Family Fun Nights encourage family interaction and provide opportunities for families and school staff to develop closer relationships. Family Fun Night activities may include community resource booths, children activities, educational programs, entertainment, and they are a great opportunity to build relationships between home and school.

Volunteers

We love to have your help in our classroom. Volunteers are needed in many different areas including classroom support, assisting children in the cafeteria, picture days, etc. All adults wishing to volunteer in the school must complete the Certified Volunteer Training. If you are interested in volunteering you can volunteer on occasion, or on a regular basis.

Along with volunteering in the classroom regularly, there are other ways to be involved. These include sending in snacks, coming to parties, coming on field trips with your child, and coming to special events. If you are just coming to these activities, filling out the volunteer form is not necessary. Please be aware that with these events, we will be asking for the names of those who will attend. This allows the office to keep track of who is in our building at all times and allows for a quicker check in on busy event and party days.

COMMUNICATION

Communication

We strive to provide families with the most up-to-date information available. We use a variety of means in order to effectively communicate with the large number of families we serve. Important announcements are placed on the marquee near the front drive to the school. Classroom teachers send weekly newsletters in reference to classroom specific information. The Menifee County School District utilizes Facebook as a way to communicate with the community. District information, school information, as well as family resources can be obtained from the Menifee County Schools Website: www.menifee.kyschools.us. Additionally, the "One Call" system may be used to communicate information such as early release days, school picture reminders, etc.

If you have any unanswered questions, you may contact the school at 606-768-8052. Telephone calls will only be transferred to a teacher's room during non-instructional time; otherwise a message will be taken and put in the teacher's mailbox.

Home Visits



There will be at least two home visits throughout the year. The first home visit will be to get better acquainted with you and your child. This will help ease his/her transition into school. Teachers will give you information about school, help you complete the needed paperwork, talk about expectations for your child's preschool year, etc.

The second home visit will be later in the year and is typically used to discuss your child's progress. We try our best to schedule home visits at a time that is convenient for you. Home visits usually run around 45 minutes and are mandatory in the preschool program.

If a home visit is scheduled and you need to cancel, please be sure to contact the teacher and/or leave a message with the school office as soon as possible.

School-Wide Rules

You may hear your child talking about “The CATS Expectations”. The entire school follows these same rules. These are the rules we follow in the classroom, cafeteria, playground, hallway and even on bus trips!

Caring
Accountability
Teamwork
Success

We also try to “catch” children for following the CATS expectations. This is a great way to reinforce their use of the rules while also encouraging them to keep up the good work! The children will get a gold coin if they get caught.

Classroom Discipline

All children will be taught the common school-wide expectations through the “CATS Expectations”. However, each teacher has expectations for his/her own classroom as well. The methods for teaching these expectations vary according to the classroom, but are still based on the premise of teaching behavior in a positive manner and correcting behavior through an instructional approach. You will receive information from your child's teacher regarding his/her classroom discipline system.

Guidance

The guidance program utilizes the Second Step curriculum, designed to increase the level of social competence among preschool and kindergarten students. This program teaches, models and reinforces skills in the areas of empathy, impulse control and anger management. The Second Step lessons and concepts are introduced in each Preschool classroom by the teacher. Each consecutive lesson builds upon skills learned in previous lessons. Children demonstrate skills through recall, role-playing, and most importantly, through “teachable moments”, reinforced in the days following the lesson by the classroom teacher and instructional assistants.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

All of our preschool classrooms deliver play-based instruction that occurs through engaging theme based activities. Instruction is designed around themes and include popular children's literature and allows students to actively participate in a literacy rich environment. We work on language, cognitive, social and motor development during each unit. Children are given experiences to build memory skills and to learn more about characters, language structure, vocabulary and events. Early literacy instruction is embedded throughout the day so that children have rich learning experiences in both whole group and small group settings. Family involvement is encouraged and often a "family project" may be sent home for you to work on and return.

Learning through Play

During the day, children will spend a significant portion of their time participating in center time. Children will have the opportunity to spend time in a variety of areas, including Art, Blocks, Dramatic Play, Science and Math, Music, etc. In each of those areas, children will be learning a variety of skills through their play. Some of these skills include:

- Creativity
- Using scissors
- Eye hand coordination
- Fine motor coordination
- Using their senses
- Self-esteem
- Pre-reading skills
- Pre-writing skills
- Math concepts
- Balance
- Matching
- Classifying
- Social skills
- Emotional development
- Book skills (caring for books, turning pages, etc.)
- Problem solving
- Rhythm

Language development
Memory
Body awareness
Basic science concepts
Observations skills

Second Steps

Second Steps is a curriculum designed to help students develop social emotional skills. It allows us to help students harness their energy and potential by teaching them to listen, pay attention, control their behavior, and get along with others. Concepts are presented in age appropriate puppet scripts, with songs that are easy to memorize. Units include skills for learning, empathy, emotional management, friendship skills and problem solving and finally, transition to kindergarten. When students enter kindergarten with the self-regulation and social-emotional skills, they're set up for success.

In addition, we also teach child a variety of other skills, including citizenship. We want children learn to be a part of a community, both now and in the future. We focusing on traits such as responsibility, caring/gratitude, respect and patience. These are all incorporated into our instruction.

Handwriting without Tears

We use a handwriting curriculum called handwriting without tears. This curriculum allows children to explore letter formation in a variety of ways. Children begin by learning capital letter formation, as well as learning important handwriting rules such as top to bottom and left to right. Children will use wood pieces, songs, chalkboards, etc. to practice letter formation. Though we are learning handwriting with a focus on capital letters, we do encourage children who are able to begin writing their names to use a capital at the beginning and lower case for the remainder. This will keep them from having to relearn the way they write their name once they enter kindergarten.

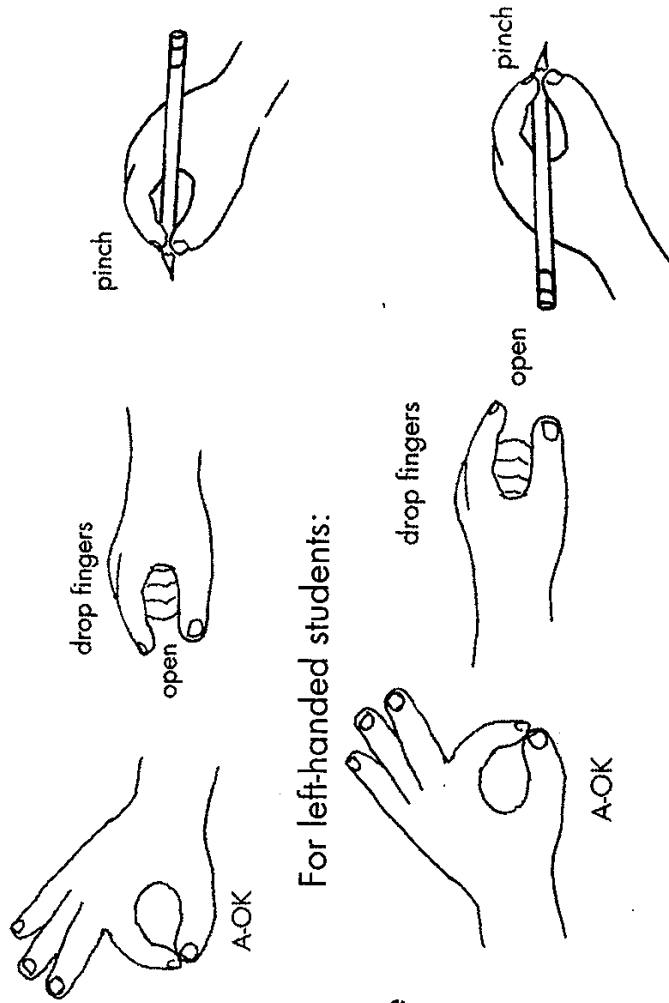
A-OK

Teach children how to hold the pencil correctly.
This is the A-OK way to help children.

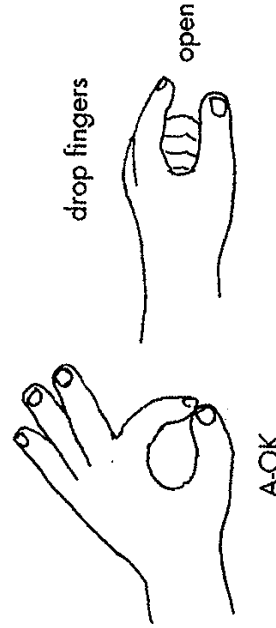
1. Make the A-OK sign.
2. Drop the fingers.
Open the A-OK.
3. Pinch the pencil.

The pencil is pinched between the thumb pad and the index finger pad. The pencil rests on the middle finger.

For right-handed students:



For left-handed students:



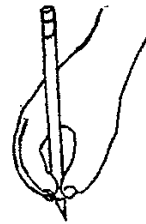
Alternate Grip

A good alternate grip is a pinch with the thumb and two fingers. The pencil rests on the ring finger.

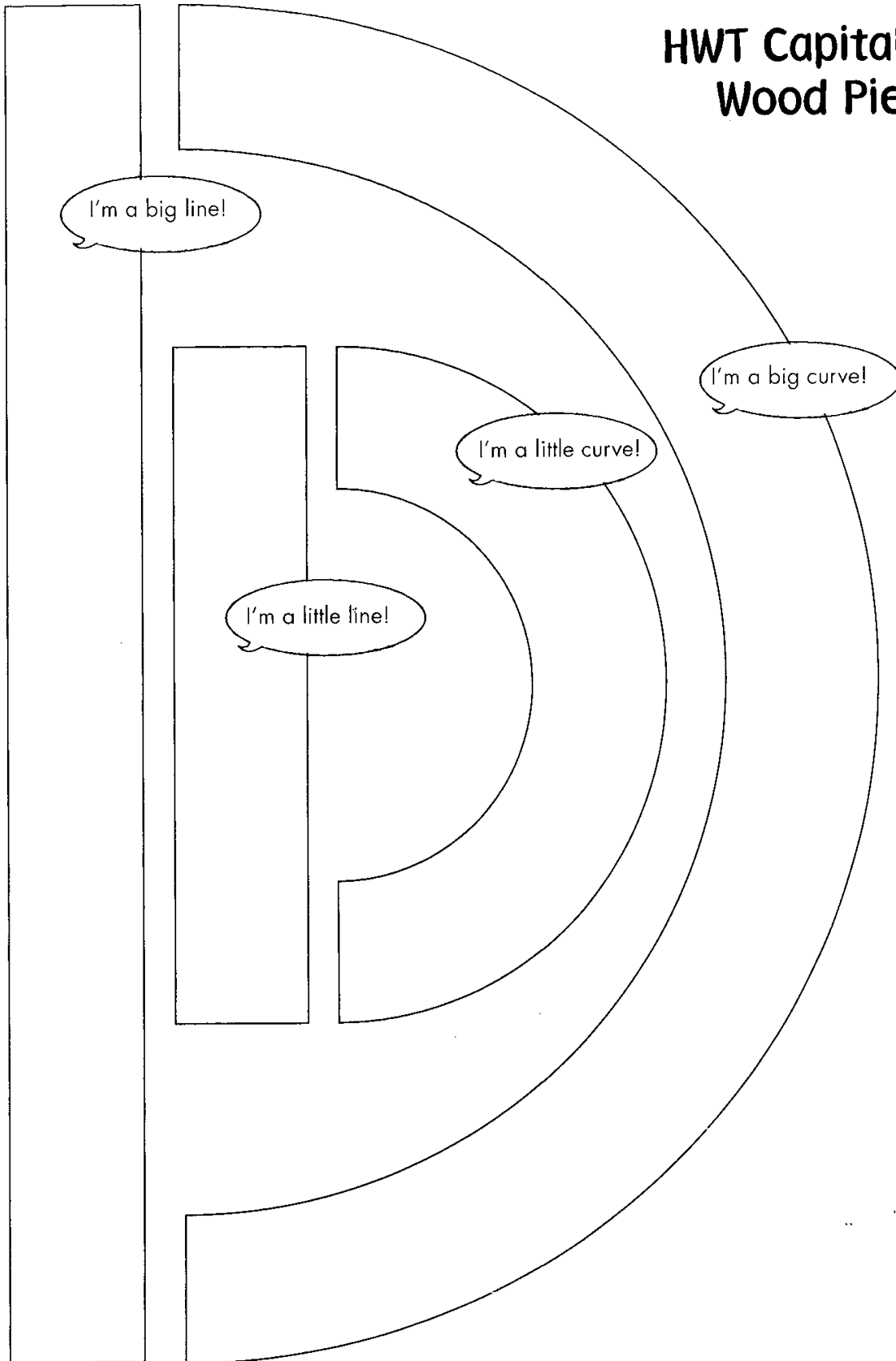
For left-handed students:



For right-handed students:



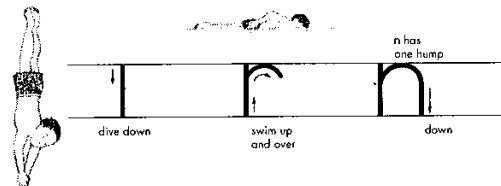
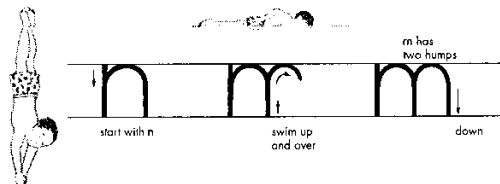
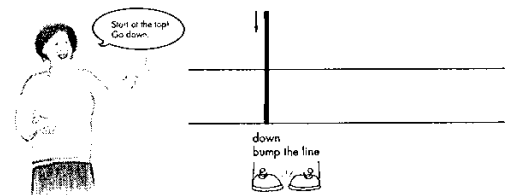
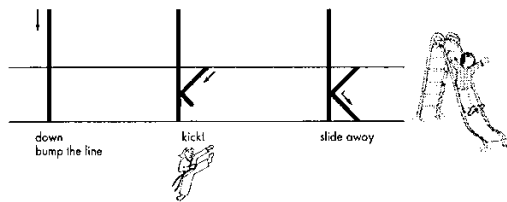
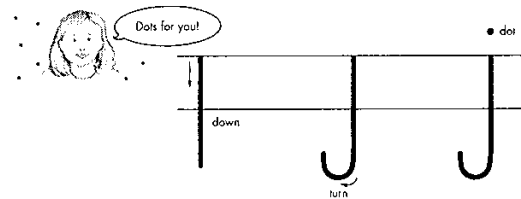
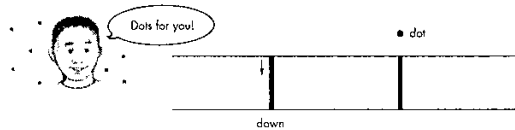
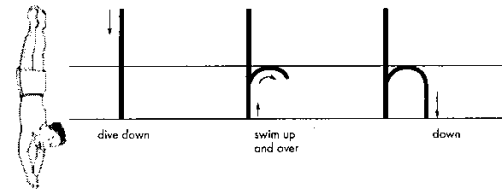
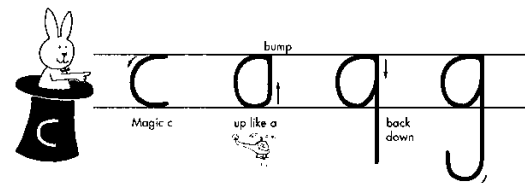
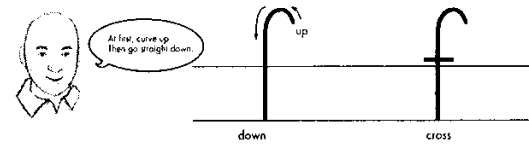
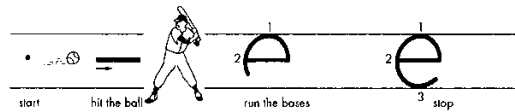
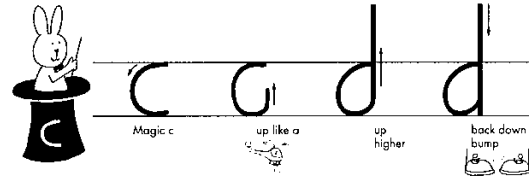
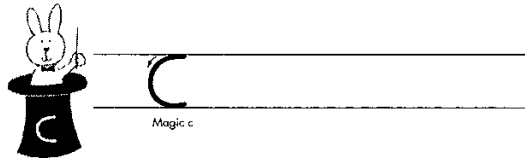
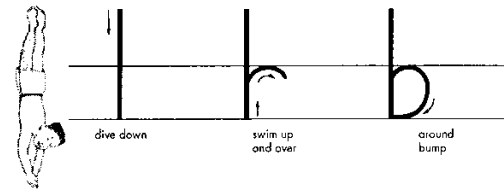
HWT Capital Letter Wood Pieces



Handwriting Without Tears®

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Handwriting Without Tears®



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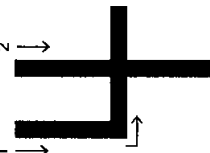
- 1 starts in the starting corner.
- 1 makes a big line down.
- 1 stops in the corner.



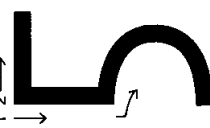
- 2 starts in the starting corner.
- 2 makes a big curve.
- 2 stops in the corner.
- 2 walks away on the bottom.



- 3 starts in the starting corner.
- 3 makes a little curve to the middle.
- 3 makes another little curve to the bottom corner.



- 4 starts in the starting corner.
- 4 makes a little line down to the middle.
- 4 walks across the dark night.
- 4 jumps to the top and says, "I did it!" (big line down)



- 5 starts in the starting corner.
- 5 makes a little line down to the middle. It starts to rain.
- 5 makes a little curve around.
- 5 puts a little line on top to stop the rain.



- b starts in the starting corner.
- b is a baby bear.
- b goes down to curl up in the corner.
- b is hibernating.



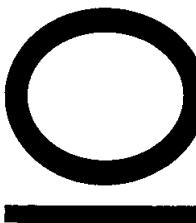
- 7 starts in the starting corner.
- 7 makes a little line across the top.
- 7 says, "I better slide down."



- 8 is different.
- 8 doesn't like corners.
- 8 starts at the top center.
- 8 begins with S and then says, "I want to go home."



- 9 is so special.
- 9 has its own corner.
- 9 makes a little curve.
- 9 goes up to the corner.
- 9 makes a big line down.



- 10 uses two places.
- 1 comes first.
- 0 is next.
- 0 starts at the top center.
- 10 is finished.



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Handwriting Without Tears® 8001 MacArthur Blvd. Cabin John, MD 20818 • Tel: 301.263.2700 • www.hwtears.com

ASSESSMENT

In preschool, we are constantly assessing your child's development in 6 different areas: Fine Motor, Gross Motor, Social Communication, Adaptive, Social and Cognitive Skills. We gather all of this information through activities and games!

EARLY CHILDHOOD STANDARDS

The Kentucky Early Childhood Standards are designed to help everyone understand what children are able to know and do from birth through four years of age. They were created to help everyone know how to help children reach their full potential. Kentucky, like many other states, has realized the importance of developing a shared set of expectations for young children to help determine later school success.

Standards at a Glance

English/ Language Arts	Mathematics
<u>E/LA Standard 1: Demonstrates general skills and strategies of the communication process</u> Benchmarks: 1.1 Uses non-verbal communication for a variety of purposes 1.2 Uses language (verbal, signed, symbolic) for a variety of purposes 1.3 Communicates with increasing clarity and use of conventional grammar <u>E/LA Standard 2: Demonstrates general skills and strategies of the listening and observing processes</u> Benchmarks: 2.1 Engages in active listening in a variety of situations 2.2 Observes to gain information and understanding <u>E/LA Standard 3: Demonstrates general skills and strategies of the reading process</u> Benchmarks: 3.1 Listens to and/or responds to reading materials with interest and enjoyment 3.2 Shows interest and understanding of the basic concepts and conventions of print 3.3 Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet 3.4 Demonstrates emergent phonemic/phonological awareness 3.5 Draws meaning from pictures, print, and text 3.6 Tells and retells a story <u>E/LA Standard 4: Demonstrates competence in the beginning skills and strategies of the writing process</u> Benchmarks: 4.1 Understands that the purpose of writing is communication 4.2 Produces marks, pictures and symbols that represent print and ideas 4.3 Explores the physical aspect of writing	<u>Math Standard 1: Demonstrates general skills and uses concepts of mathematics</u> Benchmarks: 1.1 Demonstrates an understanding of numbers and counting 1.2 Recognizes and describes shapes and spatial relationships 1.3 Uses the attributes of objects for comparison and patterning 1.4 Uses nonstandard and/or standard units to measure and describe
	Social Studies
	<u>Social Studies Standard 1: Demonstrates basic understanding of the world in which he/she lives</u> Benchmarks: 1.1 Differentiates between events that happen in the past, present, and future 1.2 Uses environmental clues and tools to understand surroundings 1.3 Shows an awareness of fundamental economic concepts 1.4 Recognizes and /or follows rules within the home, school, and community 1.5 Demonstrates understanding of the roles and relationships within his/her family and/or community 1.6 Knows that diversity exists in the world

Health/Mental Wellness	Physical Development
<u>H/MW Standard 1: Demonstrates health/mental wellness in individual and cooperative social environments</u> Benchmarks: 1.1 Demonstrates independent behavior 1.2 Shows social cooperation 1.3 Applies social problem solving skills 1.4 Show a sense of purpose (future-hopefulness)	<u>Physical Education Standard 1: Demonstrates basic gross and fine motor development</u> Benchmarks: 1.1 Performs a variety of locomotor skills with control and balance 1.2 Performs a variety of non-locomotor skills with control and balance 1.3 Combines a sequence of several motor skills with control and balance 1.4 Performs fine motor tasks using eye hand coordination
Arts and Humanities	Science
<u>A & H Standard 1: Participates and shows interest in a variety of visual art, dance, music and drama experiences</u> Benchmarks: 1.1 Develops skills in and appreciation of visual arts 1.2 Develops skills in and appreciation of dance 1.3 Develops skills in and appreciation of music 1.4 Develops skills in and appreciation of drama.	<u>Science Standard 1: Demonstrates scientific ways of thinking and working (with wonder and curiosity)</u> Benchmarks: 1.1 Explores features of environment through manipulation 1.2 Investigates simple scientific concepts 1.3 Uses a variety of tools to explore the environment 1.4 Collects, describes, and/or records information through a variety of means

HELPING YOUR CHILD AT HOME

This section of the handbook has ideas of things for you to do with your child to help with his/her development. You are your child's first and most important teacher. These are suggestions and your child's teacher can further communicate ways for you to support learning at home.

Fine Motor Development

Just like talking starts with babbling, before a child can cut or write, they must develop the small muscles in their hands. Often, during their play, they are giving their hands a mini “workout”.

Activities that help improve fine motor development include, but are not limited to:

- Have your child play with play-doh, silly putty or clay
- Shaving cream play
- Stringing macaroni or buttons onto spaghetti, pipe cleaners or yarn
- Making necklaces with Fruit Loops or Cheerios.
- Spinning small tops, etc.
- Using tweezers to move items from one bowl or container to another
- Having children sort small beads, candies, etc. so that they are using their thumb and index finger to get them one at a time
- Lacing string through cards with holes along the edges, strawberry baskets, etc.
- Stacking household items like containers, washers, nuts, etc.
- Playing with commercial construction toys like Legos, K'NEX, Tinker Toys, etc.
- Wind-up toys
- Opening and closing jars with screw on lids
- Commercial games such as: Barrel of Monkeys, perfection, Cootie, etc.
- Puzzles
- Chalk and chalkboards
- Stencils and pencils, crayons etc.
- Cutting with scissors
- Tearing and folding paper
- Helping wrap gifts

Helping Your Child Write

Children begin writing because they see others writing but must be encouraged if they are to continue. To help your child develop as a writer, notice all of their beginning attempts and applaud them for their efforts. There are stages children go through as they learn to write. First, they draw pictures. Then their drawings begin to be recognizable to adults. Artwork is followed by print like marks and symbols, the child's name, random letters and then some beginning sounds of words.

As your child begins to draw, ask them about it and write what they say below it. Encourage them to "read" their beginning writing to you. Praise their attempts by focusing on what they are doing, not the neatness of the work. Give your child a reason to write (have them make lists for you, "write" notes, etc.) and be sure they see you writing!

Stages of Writing

- Drawing
- Scribbles
- Letter-like Forms
- Letter Strings
- Copying Environmental Print
- Invented Spelling
- Conventional Spelling

Scribbling

Children learn to distinguish writing from drawing

There are many kinds of scribbles –

- Some look like pictures.
- Some look like writing – these may be linear, circular, horizontal, or vertical... they may contain repetitions of a particular kind of line segment.

Letter-like forms

- Begin to show some similarities to letters.
- Children begin to produce letter-like forms that show some similarity to letters.
- Some children will use the lines and shapes that they are observing and learning about letters and make "mock letters" during this stage.
- ***It is developmentally appropriate for children to reverse letters and words as they are learning to write; this is a part of exploring the physical properties of print.***

Letter strings

- Emerge as children start to learn different shapes and names of letters.
- Letters that are in their name are some of the most common letters at this stage of writing development.

Environmental print

- Once children are able to form letters, they can look at environmental print (such as food labels or a grocery list) and copy the letters and words.
- This stage comes before invented spelling, even though there is more accurate spelling in this stage, because creating words to convey meaning is a more advanced skill than copying words someone else created.

Invented Spelling

- As children develop they will start to use invented spelling; they may use one letter to represent each word they want to communicate.
- More advanced invented spelling will use one or more letters to represent each syllable of the word; children may use the sounds of the word to spell it phonetically.
- Eventually, children begin to spell things by sounding them out – “kat”.

Conventional writing and spelling

- Develop over a period of time.

“Scribbling is its own reward... it furnishes an unparalleled opportunity for learning the relations between the finger movements that guide the tool and the resulting visual feedback.” Eleanor Gibson, 1975.

Social and Self-Help Skills

- Play games together...work on taking turns.
- Let your child be as independent as possible...dress themselves, use the restroom independently, pour their own drink, spread their own jelly, etc.
- Encourage your child to do small chores around the house. The children love to help and it makes them more independent.
- Talk through times when your child gets frustrated. Encourage them to tell how they are feeling.
- Encourage your child to be a good listener...look into the speaker's eyes, take turns speaking, etc.
- Work on repeating personal information... full name, address, phone number, birthday, family member names...
- Let your child be more independent when washing their face, brushing their teeth, combing their hair, etc.

- Help your child get into the habit of putting their toys away, cleaning up after themselves, etc.
- Have your child practice remembering and carrying out 2 or 3 simple tasks after being told once (ex. pick up the book, bring me the pencil, and close the door).
- Have your child communicate with you about their emotions in an appropriate manner (happy, sad, angry, scared).

Early Literacy Skills

- Read aloud to your child.
- Let your child see you reading!
- Let your child tell you the story by looking at the pictures.
- Have your child tell you about the story! It is very important to talk about what you are reading. It will help your child learn about comprehension!
- Have your child hold the book when they are reading. Make sure they handle books correctly (hold them upright, turn pages from front to back). Have your child talk about letters they see in the title, words, etc.
- Let your child identify familiar sight words or sound out simple CVC words. (CVC = Consonant, Vowel, Consonant like the words cat, pig, hat, box...)
- Count the number of words in the title.

There are so many things to do together, but most of all, find a way to enjoy reading together!!!!

Play Phonemic Awareness Games!

- Talk about words that rhyme...let your child rhyme simple words to make word families...let them have fun making words up! Hat, cat, bat, nat, rat, chat... or bug, lug, nug, pug, rug, etc.
- Blend onset and rime.... What word do I have if I add the /b/ sound to the beginning of ox? /b/ ox = box
- What sound do you hear at the beginning of the word red? What other word starts with that sound?

- Do beginning sounds starting with familiar words. For example, if your child's name is Nick...have them think of other words that start with the same sound.../N/...nickel, nine, noodle....
- Work on ending sounds.... Listen to the word bat? What sound do you hear at the end of the word?
- Recite, participate, and/or join in repeating familiar songs, poems, fingerplays, and/or nursery rhymes
- Encourage your child to ask and answer why, when, and where questions.
- Sing the ABC song together...make sure your child isn't skipping or blending any letters *

Other ways to work on letter recognition:

- Look at familiar print for letters (on cereal boxes, signs, etc.)
- Magnetic letters at your child's eye level...let them name letters, use them to spell their name, simple words, etc.
- If you can, add the Leapfrog refrigerator letter set that will also tell the sounds.
- Sing the ABC song together...be sure to listen and make sure they are saying the correct letters as they sing... sometimes we have children who sing "alamenopea" instead of L, M, N, O, P! Remember that the song will help them when it comes time to learn alphabetical order. (I still catch myself singing it when I am alphabetizing!)

Play I Spy:

There are so many different skills to address with this game. I spy with my little eye...

- Something that starts with the sound /M/
- Something that is UNDER, BESIDE, BEHIND...
- Something that is BIG, LITTLE, RED, WET...

Early Math Skills

- Have your child count amounts. Be sure to help them count with 1 to 1 correspondence (20+) ** In Kindergarten they will be expected to count to 100 by the end of the year.
- Find numbers in your environment. Help your child identify numerals.
- Practice simple addition. When doing simple activities like putting shoes away, you can do things like "there are 2 shoes already by your bed. IF we add 4 more, how many do we have?"

- Sort items. Put different toys in different containers, sort silverware, etc. Let them talk about how they sorted...by color, size, and object...
- Pattern together.
- Make sure your child knows basic shapes if they don't already (triangle, rectangle, square, circle, oval).

Large Motor Skills

- Play catch...have them work on catching the ball, bean bag etc. with their hands and not trapping them with their bodies.
- Skip, hop, jump, and gallop together.
- Let your child spend some time doing activities that involve climbing and balancing!
- Throw over handed together... put one foot in front of the other, make a T and bring the ball up and over.
- Explore different ways of moving with and without music.