

# North Iowa Community Schools

*"Linking Students with Success"*



North Iowa Preschool Handbook

2024-2025

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## Welcome

### Welcome to North Iowa Elementary!

It is my pleasure to welcome your family to North Iowa Elementary. The staff and I are excited to have the opportunity to be a part of your child's life.

This handbook has been designed to serve as a guide for North Iowa Preschool students and families. The policies and procedures in this handbook will allow for a positive and safe school environment and maximize student learning.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please email, call, or stop by to see me. Educating your child is a partnership, and I look forward to having a wonderful school year with your family!

Educationally yours,  
Tina Henely, Elementary Principal

### Administrators

Joe Erickson, Superintendent  
Tina Henely, Elementary Principal  
Sarah Nachazel, Asst. Principal

### Preschool Educators

Brittney Arndorfer, Teacher  
Ashley Valvick, Paraprofessional

### Support Staff

Chris Davis, Secretary  
Cassidy Gelhaus, Nurse

### North Iowa Mission Statement:

LINKING STUDENTS WITH SUCCESS

### North Iowa Preschool Mission:

The mission of North Iowa Preschool is to help children learn to develop a sense of personal worth, security, a feeling of self-control, creativity, responsibility, interest, and joy in learning. We will also help them learn the value of sharing, the enjoyment of being curious, and more about the world around them through guided exploration. We believe all children can learn, and we seek to make each student a lifelong learner capable of becoming a self-respecting, contributing member of society.

### Goals for Children:

- Children will show competence in social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development skills, the arts, math, and literacy.
- Children will be enthusiastic and curious learners.
- Children will be safe and healthy.

### Goals for Families:

- Families will feel welcome in the classroom and at school.
- Families will work with the school in a meaningful partnership to help their children be better prepared to learn to read and write.
- Families will advocate for their children.

### Contact Information

We look forward to the beginning of the school year and are excited to get to know your child and family. Feel free to contact the preschool teacher with questions or concerns as the year progresses.  
641-562-2525

## **Admission & General Information**

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for the 4-year-old preschool program, children must be 4 years of age on/or before September 15th of the current school year.

### **Equal Educational Opportunity**

It is the policy of the North Iowa Community School not to discriminate in its education programs or educational activities based on sexual orientation, race, religion, color, national origin, marital status, or disability. Students are educated in programs, that foster knowledge of, and respect and appreciation for, the historical and contemporary contributions of diverse cultural groups, as well as men and women, to society. Students who feel they have been discriminated against are encouraged to report it to the school district Equity Coordinator, Joann Kenny, Principal, 111 3rd Ave NW, Buffalo Center, Iowa, 641-562-2525, joann.kenny@northiowa.org. Inquiries may also be directed in writing to the Director of the Region VII Office of Civil Rights, US Department of Education, 310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Ste. 800, Milwaukee, WI, 53203-2292, (414) 291-1111, or the Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146, (515) 281-5294. Procedures and levels for resolving complaints are outlined in district policy and are available upon request from the superintendent's office.

### **Ethics and Confidentiality**

Staff follows strict guidelines regarding the confidentiality of all information concerning children and their families. Confidential information about any particular child will only be shared with early childhood professionals and family members who work directly with the child.

### **Fees**

There is no tuition cost for the 4-year-old preschool program.

### **General Information (IQPPS Standard 10.4)**

A staff-child ratio of at least 1:10 will be maintained at all times to encourage adult-child interactions, promote activity among children, and ensure the safety of all students. The maximum class size is 20 children. Some classrooms may serve fewer students, based on the square footage of the location.

The morning session begins at 8:05 a.m. and concludes at 11:30 a.m.; the afternoon session begins at 12:30 p.m. and concludes at 3:45 p.m. School days are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday unless noted in the North Iowa Community School District's year calendar, which can be accessed at [Northiowa.org](http://Northiowa.org).

### **Inclusion**

The preschool facilities meet the Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility requirements (ADA). This program serves all children, including those with disabilities and unique learning needs. The staff are aware of the unique needs of individual children and are trained to follow through on specific intervention plans.

### **Student Records**

Student records containing personally identifiable information are confidential. Only persons who have a legitimate educational interest are allowed to access a student's records without the parent's permission. Parents may access their child's records during regular office hours.

# Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

## Assessment (IQPPS 4.1 - 4.9)

Children may be assessed in any of the following ways:

- Teaching Strategies GOLD© - an online-based assessment composed of observations of each child. This is done three times per year.
- Ongoing observations throughout the year
- Child samples and artifacts for portfolios and GOLD© observations
- Information is shared by families and parents as families are encouraged to share observations about their child's abilities

The assessment information from above is used to help guide instruction based on the children's needs, interests, and abilities to plan effective instruction. Children will be assessed and records kept confidential. Preschool teachers meet in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) and plan collaboratively across the district. **(IQPPS 2.5)**

Assessment information will be shared formally with families during Parent/Teacher Conferences in the fall and spring. Informal conferences are welcome and can be requested at any time. If the teacher or family has a concern, assistance can be requested from the Central Rivers Area Education Agency (CRAEA) at any time. **(IQPPS 4.9, 7.1-7.7)**

## Attire

Children participate in a variety of activities and creative play throughout the school day, and we want families to be aware that spills or stains may occur on clothing. Please keep this in mind as you dress your child for school each day, and supply an extra change of clothes in case of a spill or mess. If your child chooses to wear a dress or skirt, please ensure that they have shorts or leggings under the dress. Students are not allowed to wear sandals without a heel strap, close-toe preferred. Gym shoes are required to be worn for indoor play in gyms. It is recommended to label all clothing and shoes with their name.

## Curriculum

Our preschool program uses the Creative Curriculum as its framework. The Creative Curriculum is a research-based preschool curriculum that focuses on four main developmental areas: Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development, Cognitive Development, and Language Development. A family's culture and the child's experiences outside the school setting are recognized as being an important part of the child's growth and development. The curriculum goals and objectives will guide teachers' planning and instruction based on the Teaching Strategies GOLD© assessment tool.

## Instruction

Each day, the children will have choice time among the different interest areas or centers. They will have the opportunity to self-select where they might like to play and work. Examples of interest areas are:

- Library - Students have the opportunity to read and look at a variety of books independently or with peers
- Technology - Each classroom has access to media and technology

- Writing - Students have access to a variety of writing utensils and materials
- Art - Students may choose a variety of art materials to create individual works of art
- Sensory Table - Students can develop their senses and cognitive development through play in a sensory table. Items may include water, sand, snow, rice, pasta, etc. Materials are rotated regularly.
- Blocks - Students can build with different types of blocks and engage in imaginary play with items added to the block center
- Dramatic Play - Students may role-play and pretend with props and settings. Materials are rotated to allow for a variety of experiences
- Toys and Games - Children will develop cognitive skills, such as counting, problem-solving, categorizing, and matching
- Science - Children will explore a variety of science materials

Teaching staff supports children as they help them build friendships by entering into, sustaining, and enhancing play. Teaching staff also assist children in resolving conflict by helping them identify feelings, describing problems, and trying alternative solutions.

### **Outdoor Play and Learning**

There are daily opportunities for students to play outdoors as weather permits. This time will allow children to get exercise and develop their large motor skills. When we are not able to be outside due to the weather, children will be allowed to use indoor equipment for similar activities.

Large motor activities/ recess takes place outside, weather permitting. We ask that you dress your child accordingly. For cold weather, hats, coats, mittens, boots, and snow pants will be needed. Please label all the items with your child's name. For warmer days, dressing your child lightly is just as important. There are areas on our playground that allow children to be in the shade during this time. Children can wear hats for sun protection, and we encourage you to apply sunscreen to your child before sending them to school.

### **Program Standards**

The North Iowa Community School District implements the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards for Preschool.

- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Relationships                | 6. Teachers                   |
| 2. Curriculum                   | 7. Families                   |
| 3. Teaching                     | 8. Community Relationships    |
| 4. Assessment Of Child Progress | 9. Physical Environment       |
| 5. Health                       | 10. Leadership And Management |

# Family Partnership

## Arrival and Departure (IQPPS Standard 10.9)

### A.M. Preschoolers

Students riding the bus to school will arrive between 7:45-8:05 a.m. Students may be dropped off between 7:45-8:05 a.m. at the Little Bison entrance. School staff will escort preschool students from the bus to the classroom when they arrive. Preschoolers must be properly supervised by an adult once they arrive at school and cannot wait in the classroom alone. The morning preschool session ends at 11:30. School staff will escort preschoolers to the school shuttle. Parents can pick them up at the Little Bison exit. If there is a change to the pick-up time/routine for your child, parents are responsible for notifying the office at 641-562-2525.

### P.M. Preschoolers

Students riding the school shuttle to school will arrive between 12:25-12:30 p.m. Students may be dropped off between 12:25-12:30 p.m. at the Little Bison entrance. School staff will escort preschool students from the bus to the classroom when they arrive. Preschoolers must be properly supervised by an adult once they arrive at school and cannot wait in the classroom alone. The afternoon preschool session ends at 3:45. School staff will escort preschoolers to the bus at the end of the day. Parents can pick them up at the Little Bison exit. If there is a change to the pick-up time/routine for your child, parents are responsible for notifying the office at 641-562-2525.

## Attendance

Students who are enrolled in Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program at North Iowa Community School are expected to be in school for the entire session, being punctual in their arrival and departure each school day. Families are asked to schedule appointments outside the preschool session times. Irregular attendance interferes with the child's progress of growth and development, as well as full participation in the curriculum. Please contact (send a text message or call) the elementary office with the reason for absence as soon as possible. The preschool elementary office secretary will message or call the parent/legal guardian when no contact has been made with the school on behalf of the preschooler.

## Family Involvement

North Iowa Preschool encourages families to be very involved in their child's education by observing their children during the day when possible and meeting with staff. Family members are welcome to visit at any time during class sessions.

Families are surveyed in enrollment paperwork and through other questionnaires during the year regarding their family, beliefs, and preferences. Home visits are conducted at the beginning of the school year for students enrolled in the 4-year-old program. Preschool staff communicates with families on at least a weekly basis regarding children's activities. Family teacher conferences are held in the fall and spring, and when either party requests. At least one family night will be held during the school year. Families are encouraged to share any concerns, preferences, or questions with the preschool teacher or administration at any time.

When face-to-face contact is not possible, staff rely on notes from home, emails, the school messaging system, phone calls, and newsletters as an alternative means to establish and maintain open communication. Ideas for families to be involved in the school experience:

- Share information about your child's interests and abilities
- Attend family conferences in the fall and spring
- Check your child's backpack each day
- Participate in field trips
- Share your talents with your child's class
- Come to play
- Help with special events

Open and honest communication between families and the preschool program is an essential part of a high-quality early childhood program. If there is ever a time you have a concern regarding your child, we want to encourage you to address your concern with your child's teacher. If you have a concern or issue that is unresolved by your child's teacher, please contact the elementary principal.

### **Home Visits**

Home visits are completed once during a made before the start of school for student's enrollment in our 4-year-old program. This is an opportunity for the preschool teacher to get to know you, your child, and your family and for you to begin to create a partnership between home and school to best meet your child's needs. This is a great time for you to share what makes your family unique, how you prefer to communicate with the teacher and share your knowledge about your child's interests, approaches to learning, and developmental needs. You can help the teacher develop goals for your child and understand what concerns you have for your child.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

The preschool program will have formal conferences in the fall and spring. During conferences, the teacher will share the results of classroom assessments and samples of your child's work. Together, you will make a plan and set goals for your child to continue on the path of growth and development.

### **Preschool Advisory Committee**

North Iowa CSD Preschool has a preschool advisory committee composed of parents, school staff, and other community members interested in the preschool program. This group meets one or more times during the school year to provide feedback on services that meet children's and family's needs. They also serve as a sounding board for new ideas and services. Please let the preschool teacher know if you are interested in being a part of the Preschool Advisory Committee.

### **Weather**

In the event of bad weather, the district will make decisions on late starts, early dismissals, or school cancellations. Please tune in to area radio, news stations, the North Iowa CSD website, and Facebook for that information. If the district delays school 2 hours due to inclement weather, morning preschool classes will be CANCELED. Afternoon preschool classes will be in session, following their normal schedule 12:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Because of the high number of contacts that need to be made at these times, please refrain from calling the school and pay close attention to the area stations.

You can also sign up on the school website for delays and cancellations to be sent as a text message or email using the School Notification System - JMC. You can receive either an e-mail or a cell phone text message alert about all delays and cancellations by signing up on JMC. Your first step would be to stop by the building office and sign-up.



## **Food and Nutrition**

Children attending our 4-year-old preschool will be served breakfast (a.m. students only), optional. The breakfast fees and menu are following the district. Preschool students eat as a group from 8:05-8:20. If after that time, students will be given a grab n' go breakfast to eat in the classroom. Meal accounts are not allowed to go to a negative balance. Parents may pay with a check or deposit funds into their JMC Family lunch account. Per our district's Wellness Policy, the menu will reflect more of an emphasis on whole grains, fresh fruits, and vegetables.

There is a designated snack time in both the AM and PM Preschool classes. The teacher will provide more detailed information.

Children will have clean, sanitary drinking water available to them throughout the school day.

Based on the recommendations supplied by their health care provider, meal plans will be developed and followed for children with food allergies or special health care needs. Children with food allergies will be protected from any contact with problematic foods. High-risk foods (choking hazards) will not be served.

Foods that come from home for sharing among children are either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers.

## **Health and Safety**

### **Bathroom and Diaper Changing Procedures (IQPPS 5.5)**

Toilet learning is an important time in a child's development. For children who cannot use the toilet consistently, the following procedures are in place:

- Diapering will only be done in the designated diaper area with a changing table. Food handling will not be permitted in this diapering area.
- Staff will follow all diapering guidelines outlined in the Iowa Quality Preschool Programs Standards:
  - Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.
  - Staff checks children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or contain feces at least every 2 hours. Diapers are changed when wet or soiled.
  - Staff change children's diapers or soiled underwear in the designated changing areas and not elsewhere in the facility.
  - At all times, caregivers have a hand on the child if being changed on an elevated surface.
  - Surfaces used for changing and on which changing materials are placed are not used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects, especially not for any object involved with food or feeding.
  - Containers that hold soiled diapers and diapering materials have a lid that opens and closes tightly using a hands-free device (e.g., a step can). Containers are kept closed and are inaccessible to children. The container will be clearly labeled to show its intended use.

- Diapering and gloving posters will be posted in the changing area showing procedures through the use of visuals and words. These procedures are used by the program administrator to evaluate teaching staff that change diapers.
- Potty chairs will not be used due to the risk of spreading infectious diarrhea.
- All families are asked to provide an extra set of clothing for their child in case of an “accident” or messy play. Please clearly label the clothing with your child’s name to reduce the possibility of mistakes.

### **Cleaning and Sanitization**

Routine cleaning will be supervised by the preschool teacher and will follow the Cleaning and Sanitation Table in the QPPS manual. A checklist will be posted in the classroom to document that the staff is following the proper cleaning routines. Toys that have been placed in a child’s mouth or that are contaminated will be removed and disinfected after they are cleaned with soap and water. This also applies to surfaces in the classroom. Toys and surfaces will be sanitized using disinfectant approved by the district that is safe for child contact. Machine-washable cloth toys that are contaminated will be laundered before another use. (QPPS Standard 5.24) Facilities will be cleaned when children are not present if the cleaning requires hazardous chemicals.

### **Fire Safety**

A fully working fire extinguisher and carbon monoxide detector are installed in each classroom and are tagged and serviced annually. Fire drills are conducted monthly and recorded on a log.

### **First Aid Kit**

A first aid kit is located in all preschool rooms. Following each use of items in the kit, it will be inspected, and missing or used items will be replaced. The kit will be inspected monthly. A first aid kit is present during indoor/outdoor play. A kit is taken along on field trips or outings away from the site.

### **General Health and Safety Information (IQPPS Standard 10.5)**

- All staff must be alert to the health needs of each child
- Staff must be alert to the whereabouts of all children
- Staff follow proper procedures for hand washing, using disinfectants, and following universal precautions
- Staff are familiar with evacuation routes and procedures
- Staff complete blood-borne pathogens training yearly
- At least one staff member will possess a certificate of completion of pediatric first-aid training and CPR and is always present with each group of children. When a child in the group has a special health condition that might require CPR, one staff person who has completed training in CPR will always be present.

### **Hand Washing Practices**

Frequent hand washing is key to preventing the spread of disease. Teachers will show children how to wash their hands effectively. Posters of children using proper hand washing procedures are placed by each sink.

## **Health and Immunization Certificates**

The Iowa Immunization Law requires that all children entering school be up to date with required immunizations. If your student has a religious or medical exemption in place the school requires a copy of the exemption form.

## **Health and Safety Records (IQPPS Standards 10.8)**

Health and safety information will be collected from families and maintained in a file in the school office. These health and safety records include:

- Current health examination results including immunizations
- Current emergency contact information
- Names of authorized individuals to have access to health information
- Instructions for any special health needs such as allergies or chronic illnesses
- Individual emergency care plans for children with known medical conditions
- Supporting evidence for under-immunization

## **Illness Policy and Exclusion of Sick Children**

For the health and safety of all children, it is important that sick children not be brought to school. A child should stay home and remain home until these symptoms have subsided for 24 hours, and if needed, they have been taking antibiotics for 24 hours.

- Illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities
- A need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
- Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Pink eye with drainage

If a child is observed to have any signs of illness while attending the program, parents will be informed immediately to pick up the child. For this reason, please keep current emergency numbers on file with the office. In the meantime, your child will be provided with a place to rest, away from other children until they are picked up.

## **Medical Emergencies and Accident Notification (IQPPS Standard 10.10)**

Each classroom has an Emergency Contact Information binder that includes:

- emergency sign-out sheets
- class lists
- contact information for each child

Procedures for safety situations are outlined in a binder available for viewing in the office. If your child receives a minor injury during the day, first aid will be applied as needed. Minor cuts and scrapes will be treated with soap and water and bumps will be treated with an ice pack. Significant injuries will be documented.

## **Medication Policies and Procedures**

Medications brought to school need to be in the prescription container or for over-the-counter medications, in the original labeled container with the student's name written on the container. The parent or guardian must sign a request to have this prescribed medication dispensed to their child according to the written directions of the prescribing physician or as written on the container. Medication permission slips are valid for the current school year or as stated on the permission form. Medications must be taken to the school nurse to be administered by the school nurse during the school day.

## **Protection from Hazards and Environmental Health**

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

The program maintains facilities so they are free from harmful animals, insects, pests, and poisonous plants. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents skin contact, inhalation, and other exposure to children.

## **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect (IQPPS Standard 10.6)**

Staff is required by law to report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Human Services. All staff are required to "recertify" with the state in the area of "Mandatory Reporter: Child and Dependent Adult Abuse." All reports are confidential.

## **Reporting Communicable Diseases**

Staff will provide families with information in writing about any unusual level or type of communicable diseases to which their child has been exposed. It will include signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of exposure, and control measures being implemented at the program. The school district has arrangements with local health authorities and obtains advice from those agencies when outbreaks of communicable diseases occur.