

COLUMBIA COUNTY



PRE-K PROGRAM

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

2008-2009

COLUMBIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

Bel Air Elementary

325 Bel Air Road
Evans, GA 30809
706-863-8724

Lewiston Elementary

5426 Hereford Farm Road
Evans, GA 30809
706-650-6064

Brookwood Elementary

455 South Old Bel Air Road
Grovetown, GA 30813
706-855-7538

Martinez Elementary

213 Flowing Wells Road
Martinez, GA 30907
706-863-8308

Cedar Ridge Elementary

1000 Trudeau Trail
Grovetown, GA 30813
706-447-2100

North Columbia Elementary

2870 Ray Owens Road
Appling, GA 30802
706-541-1158

Euclhee Creek Elementary

795 Louisville Road
Grovetown, GA 30813
706-556-4000

North Harlem Elementary

525 Fairview Drive
Harlem, GA 30814
706-556-5995

Evans Elementary

628 Gibbs Road
Evans, GA 30809
706-863-1202

River Ridge Elementary

4109 Mullikin Road
Evans, GA 30809
706-447-1016

Greenbrier Elementary

5116 Riverwood Parkway
Evans, GA 30809
706-650-6060

South Columbia Elementary

325 McCormick Road
Martinez, GA 30907
706-863-3220

Grovetown Elementary

300 Ford Avenue
Grovetown, GA 30813
706-863-0800

Westmont Elementary

4558 Oakley Pirkle Road
Martinez, GA 30907
706-863-0992

COLUMBIA COUNTY PREKINDERGARTEN HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

Introduction

Georgia's Pre-K Program for the 2008-2009 school year is funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education. As a Georgia resident choosing to have your child participate in this educational initiative, please know that Georgia is a national leader in providing preschool options for four-year-old children. Georgia's Pre-K Programs operate in both public schools and private child care/educational facilities. The purpose of this handbook is to provide the goals and objectives of the program and to offer suggestions that you can follow to help your child be successful in the Prekindergarten Program and throughout his or her educational career.

COLUMBIA COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM MISSION

Columbia County Schools will prepare students to become successful, responsible, contributing members of society. Through cooperative alliances with the home and the community, we will provide an educational experience, rich in content, innovative, relevant, and diverse, that challenges all students to meet world-class standards of educational excellence.

GOALS OF THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Georgia's Pre-K Program provides appropriate activities and learning experiences that help prepare young children for school. The term *school readiness* means that children are socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively prepared for continued success in kindergarten.

Georgia's Pre-K Program helps children become independent, self-confident, enthusiastic learners. Participation in the program encourages children to develop good habits and daily routines.

Georgia's Pre-K Program encourages teachers to adopt child-centered instructional practices based on the interests and the developmental skill levels of each child. Research shows that children benefit most when instruction is child-centered. Child-centered instruction allows teachers to facilitate learning in a rich environment that fosters children's initiative, exploration, and collaborative interaction with peers and adults.

To ensure a smooth transition to kindergarten, children with possible special needs will be referred to the proper source or agency for access to and coordination of health and other services. Families are also provided with information and assistance, if requested, in gathering required documentation necessary for their child's enrollment in kindergarten. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning provides summer activity kits that will continue to help prepare children for kindergarten.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Children four years of age on or before September 1, whose parents are Georgia residents are eligible to attend the Georgia's Pre-K Program this school year.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

During the registration process, parents will be asked to supply the following documents:

- Proof of Age - certified birth certificate
- Pre-school/Child Care Immunization Certificate (DHR form #3231 signed and dated)
- Certificate of Ear, Eye, and Dental Examination (DHR form #3300)
- Social Security Number - may be waived if a parent signs a statement objecting to the requirement
- Proof of residency (gas, water, electrical bill)
- Proof of guardianship if not biological parent
- Information indicating eligibility for additional financial assistance

REGISTRATION

Registration is held during the spring at announced times throughout the county. To register to attend Pre-K at a particular school, the child must reside with his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s) in that attendance zone as indicated by the county. A lottery is held to determine the children who have the opportunity to participate. A waiting list is maintained once the available slots are filled. Representatives from child care centers are extended the opportunity to be present at schools to help place children, who are not selected through the lottery, in slots available at the private centers.

Note: A list of approved prekindergarten program providers and their sites is available through Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning.

(1-888-4GA-PREK or <http://www.dec.state.ga.us>)

COLUMBIA COUNTY SCHOOL CALENDAR

2008-2009

July 29 – August 4.....	Principals' Conference
August 5, 6, 7, 8	Pre-Planning
August 11	First Day of School
September 1.....	Holiday/Labor Day
September 10.....	Progress Reports
September 18.....	*Early Release/Parent Conferences
October 13	End of Nine Weeks
October 16.....	Student Holiday/Teacher Professional Learning Day
October 17	Holiday/Fall Break
October 20.....	Report Cards
November 4.....	Student Holiday/Teacher Professional Learning Day (Election Day)
November 14.....	Progress Reports
November 26-28.....	Holidays/Thanksgiving
December 17-19	Semester Exams
December 19	End First Semester
December 22-January 2 (inclusive).....	Holidays
January 5	First Day Second Semester
January 12	Report Cards
January 19	Holiday/Martin Luther King Day
February 5	Progress Reports
February 12	*Early Release/Parent Conferences
February 16	Holiday/Winter Break
February 17	Student Holiday/Teacher Professional Learning Day
March 13	End Third Nine Weeks
March 20	Report Cards
April 6-10.....	Holidays/Spring Holidays
April 21	Progress Reports
May 20-22	Semester Exams
May 22	End Second Semester
May 23	Graduation
May 25	Holiday/Memorial Day
May 26-28.....	Post Planning
May 28	Report Cards

*Middle and High Schools – 11:30 a.m., Elem. Schools – 12:15 p.m. **First Semester = 88 days; Second Semester = 92 days

Revised/Approved 12/11/07

CURRICULUM

Various appropriate curricula are utilized in Georgia's Pre-K Program. Columbia County has selected the High/Scope Approach to Preschool Education/Georgia's Pre-K Program Content Standards. Plans are in process to review, revise, and expand the curriculum as needed. A listing of the High/Scope Preschool Key Experiences follows:

Creative Representation

- Recognizing objects by sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell
- Imitating actions and sounds
- Relating pictures, photographs, and models to real places and things
- Pretending and role-playing
- Making models out of clay, blocks, etc.
- Drawing and painting

Language and Literacy

- Talking with others about personally meaningful experiences
- Describing objects, events, and relations
- Having fun with language: Listening to stories and poems, making up stories and rhymes
- Writing in various ways: drawing, scribbling, letter-like forms, invented spelling, conventional forms
- Reading in various ways: reading storybooks, signs, symbols and other print materials

Social Relations/Initiative

- Making and expressing choices, plans and decisions
- Solving problems encountered in play
- Taking care of one's own needs
- Expressing feelings in words
- Participating in group routines
- Being sensitive to the feelings, interests, and needs of others
- Building relationships with children and adults
- Creating and experiencing collaborative play
- Dealing with social conflict in constructive ways

Movement

- Moving in place
- Moving from place to place
- Moving with objects
- Describing movement
- Interpreting movement directions
- Expressing creativity in movement
- Feeling and expressing beat
- Moving with others to a common beat

Music

- Responding to music
- Making and describing sounds
- Playing musical instruments
- Singing

Classification

- Exploring and describing similarities, differences and the attributes of things
- Sorting and matching
- Using and describing something in several different ways
- Distinguishing between "some" and "all"
- Holding more than one attribute in mind at a time
- Describing characteristics something does not possess or what class it does not belong to

Seriation

- Comparing attributes: longer/shorter; rougher/smooth, etc.
- Arranging several things one after another in a series or pattern and describing the relationships: big, bigger, biggest
- Fitting one ordered set of objects to another through trial and error

Number

- Comparing number and amount to determine "more," "less," "fewer," "same amount"
- Arranging two sets of objects in one-to-one correspondence
- Counting objects as well as counting by rote

Space

- Filling and emptying
- Fitting things together and taking them apart
- Changing the shape and arrangement of objects (folding, twisting, stretching, stacking)
- Observing things and places from different spatial viewpoints
- Experiencing and describing relative positions, directions, and distances of things in the immediate environment (play space, building, neighborhood)
- Interpreting spatial relations in drawings, pictures, and photographs

Time

- Starting and stopping an action on signal
- Experiencing and describing different rates of movement
- Experiencing and comparing time intervals
- Experiencing and anticipating change and sequences of event

FIELD TRIPS

Preschoolers have the opportunity to participate in a number of educational field trips. Notice of field trips will be sent home in bookbags. All children must have written permission to go on these trips. There should be no cost associated with field trips. Parents are invited to go on most trips.

DISCIPLINE PLAN

Being able to follow rules and understand consequences are vital parts of education. Learning how to live and work together enhances a child's positive self-image.

Every effort is made to catch a child being good. Good behaviors are praised and encouraged. The children are always told how special they are and how much they are loved. Teachers affirm that children are acceptable; however, sometimes their behavior is not. When inappropriate behavior occurs, positive steps are taken to assist the child in gaining control of his/her behavior. If the inappropriate behavior continues or is severe, contact will be made and maintained with his/her parents/guardians until the behavior improves. No preschooler will be paddled. However, if a child is very much out of control, he/she may be sent home. Both child and parent are responsible to follow all individual school rules, policies, and procedures.

ATTENDANCE

The school day is the regularly scheduled school day. All children are expected to come to school each day. If your child becomes ill at home before leaving for school, please keep him/her at home.

Regular attendance is important in order for your child to realize the maximum benefit from the program. Excessive absences will be addressed by the principal/resource worker and/or the director. According to the guidelines, any child who is absent for two consecutive weeks, without a medical (doctor's excuse needed) or other reasonable explanation, must be removed from the roster.

TARDINESS

Children should arrive at school on time. On the rare occasion when your child is tardy (late), sign in at the office, then follow your school's procedure for getting your child to his/her classroom. According to the guidelines, any child who is tardy for two consecutive weeks, without a medical (doctor's excuse needed) or other reasonable explanation, must be removed from the roster.

NEVER DROP YOUR CHILD OFF AT SCHOOL AND LEAVE UNLESS SCHOOL PERSONNEL ARE THERE TO GREET THE CHILD.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Children may be picked up from school early by parents, guardians or designated adults only. You must go to the school office first and sign out the child. Then, your child will be called to the office or you will be instructed to go to the classroom to get him/her. If your child needs to be picked up by someone whose name is NOT on the list of designated adults, please inform the office in writing.

Important: Each school will maintain an approved list of ADULTS who will be able to pick up your child. Please update your child's list with any changes and notify your resource coordinator. We hope that you realize these precautions are for your child's safety.

APPROPRIATE DRESS FOR SCHOOL

Preschool is a very active place to learn. Children paint, glue, play in sand and water and, weather permitting, play outdoors every day. Therefore, sturdy, comfortable, washable clothes are necessary. This allows the children to become actively involved in all activities. Make sure your child's clothes are easy to pull up and down for bathroom needs. Tennis shoes seem to work best for all activities. Flipflops, clogs, etc. are not safe footwear for school. Remember that we go outside everyday, if the weather permits. Your child should always have a sweater or jacket available for cool days and classroom temperature comfort. Light clothing is necessary when it gets hot. Please write your child's name on all clothes that the child can take off at school. (ex. jackets, sweaters)

ITEMS TO SEND TO SCHOOL

Each child should have available a change of clothes for the appropriate season, including underwear and socks. If your child uses the spare clothes, kindly remember to send replacements.

Your child will also need a bookbag and a folder of some type to carry notes and art work. **THIS BAG NEEDS TO BE CHECKED DAILY FOR NOTES FROM YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER OR RESOURCE WORKER.** Your child's work will be sent home regularly in his/her bookbag.

ITEMS NOT TO SEND TO SCHOOL

It is best not to send toys or personal items to school on a regular basis with a child. It is almost impossible for school personnel to be responsible for a child's favorite toy when it is so easy for toys to be broken or misplaced among the toys in the classroom. However, there may be times when it is appropriate for children to bring items for "show and tell."

SICK CHILDREN

If your child becomes ill at school, school personnel will contact you. If you cannot be reached, the emergency contact number which you have provided will be used. Sick children should not be at school. **Do not send a child to school with a fever or if he/she is ill.**

If a child is absent from school due to illness, he/she must return to school with a note from his/her parent indicating reason.

MEDICATION

According to Columbia County Board of Education policy, medicine cannot be administered by the school personnel without a parent's written permission. Students who need to take prescription medicine must have the appropriate signed form on file or written permission before medication is sent to school. The medication must be in its original container. Parents are asked to bring all medicine to the school; four-year-olds are too young to have the responsibility of getting to school with the medicine and remembering to inform the teacher that the medicine is in the bookbag.

PARENT-SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

School Responsibilities

- Provides a safe, warm, nurturing, stress-free environment for children
- Provides appropriate activities to meet the individual needs of each child
- Develops a positive relationship with parents/guardians and encourages participation in school, classroom, and parent education activities throughout the year
- Provides opportunities for parents/guardians to participate in school, classroom, and parent education activities throughout the year

Parent Responsibilities

- Ensures that the child attends school daily unless sick
- Attends Parent Activities
- Spends one hour with child in the classroom each month (P.A.C.T. Time-Parent and Child Together Time)
- Attends parent conferences as scheduled

ORIENTATION FOR PARENTS

An orientation program, including more specific information about the curriculum and general program, is conducted by school personnel during the first month of the program.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent Activities

Parent Activities will address topics such as four-year-old behavior and effective discipline, health and safety, and preparation for kindergarten.

Some meetings will be celebrations which families can enjoy.

PACT Time

Parent and Child Together Time is an opportunity to spend an hour in the classroom each month with one's child sharing his/her learning experiences. This is a part of the Parent Commitment agreed upon during registration.

RESOURCE COORDINATION SERVICES AND MATERIALS

Support services are a vital component of the success of Georgia's Pre-K Program. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning provides children and families with *voluntary* access to services that will better prepare the child for school. Columbia County has three Resource Coordinators (RC) who help in accessing services and making sure each child's Pre-K experience is successful.

Examples of assistance provided by RCs, upon request:

- * Information on job skills training or job openings
- * Parent workshops on a variety of topics
- * Linking families to agencies for help in obtaining health services, housing, utilities, food or clothing
- * Information on literacy and GED classes
- * Information on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- * Referral to other agencies for assessment and/or treatment of any issues that might hinder children's learning in school
- * Kindergarten readiness information

Parents are invited to check out materials such as books, videos, parenting manuals, etc., for home use from the resource coordinator. Parents are encouraged to check out books from the library or classroom as often as possible. However, it is especially important that items be returned promptly to keep them in circulation.

Parents are also encouraged to keep scissors, glue, paper, pencils, paint, etc., on hand for use at home.

MEALS AND SNACKS

Breakfast and lunch are available for all students at regular, reduced, and free rates. All Pre-K students go to breakfast and lunch. Therefore, if your child is not eating breakfast, you may want to send a snack. Nutritious snacks are provided to all preschoolers daily. Free or reduced lunch forms may be obtained from your school.

TRANSPORTATION FOR PRE-K STUDENTS

Prior to the first day of school, parents should check the school schedule and, if the child is a bus rider, the approximate time for pickup. This information is made available by the system Transportation Department. For Pre-K students, a parent or responsible person must wait with the child and help him board the bus in the morning as well as be there in the afternoon to receive the child. If no parent/responsible person is waiting for the child in the afternoon, the child is subject to be taken to the local police department. Transportation will be terminated if no adult is present for pick up and delivery. No preschooler will be allowed to walk to and from school with brothers and sisters.

SPECIAL SERVICES FOR PRE-K STUDENTS

Should a Pre-K student be having excessive trouble with his/her speech, hearing, motor skills, emotions, or "academics," he/she may be referred to the Student Support Team where recommendations can be made to help the student. If needed, the SST can refer a child for further screening and testing. Parents are always a part of the SST process.

The Columbia County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, national origin, or handicap in educational programs, activities, admissions to facilities, or in employment practices.

