

Muscle Shoals City Schools Preschool Program



A Manual for Parents and Teachers

2020-2021

Muscle Shoals City Schools Preschool Program

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Muscle Shoals City Schools Preschool Program

The Muscle Shoals City Schools Preschool Program is an inclusive preschool program for 3 and 4 year olds with disabilities, as specified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). The class is also made up of typically developing peers who must be 4 years of age by September 1st. The typically developing preschoolers are chosen through an application process. This is an innovative program that is offered for preschoolers who reside in Muscle Shoals. Our mission is to provide a developmentally appropriate preschool program for all children. The program emphasizes learning through a play-based, child-initiated approach. Instruction for each child is both age and individually appropriate. The focus is to teach children how to learn rather than what to learn in order to facilitate their development and transition to kindergarten.

The goal of the program is for each daily class to average 10 to 12 students with approximately 6 or 7 children who are typically developing and 5 to 6 with special needs; however, these numbers may fluctuate depending on the number of students identified with special needs. Including children with and without disabilities is a fundamental component of the Muscle Shoals City Schools Preschool Program philosophy. Children with disabilities benefit from appropriate interactions and observations of same-age peers. At the same time, children without disabilities learn about disabilities at a young age before they form misconceptions. According to the specific needs of the students in the class, the enrollment may increase or decrease during a school year. The class is staffed with one certified teacher and paraprofessional(s).

Enrollment

Children with special needs who meet the state requirements for special education eligibility and need a full range of services as determined by the IEP team are eligible to attend on their 3rd birthday. They may continue to receive preschool services until they are eligible for Kindergarten (turn 5 on or before September 1st). No child will remain in the Muscle Shoals City Schools Preschool Program after reaching the age of eligibility for kindergarten unless the IEP team determines this is appropriate. Children without special needs must turn 4 on or before September 1st to be eligible to start at the beginning of the school year. The staff will evaluate the appropriateness of a late enrollment on an individual basis.

Application Process

Children with special needs go through the special education referral process. The IEP team will make a determination regarding the child's enrollment in the preschool program and the frequency of special education services. Children may be referred at any time during the year. Children with special needs who are eligible for special education services will continue to attend the preschool program until they are eligible for Kindergarten (turn 5 on or before September 1st) unless the IEP team determines otherwise.

Employees as well as residents within the Muscle Shoals City School District with typically developing children without special needs may complete an online application beginning January 15, 2020 and ending on March 13, 2020. Children of Muscle Shoals City Schools employees are given first priority to fill the need for typically developing children. These students will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis. Children of non-employees will be contacted after April 1st, if space is available. Parents must provide two required proofs of residency by April 15th if they are notified that their child's application has been pulled for consideration. Applications will be reviewed along with the proofs of residency to determine eligibility. Parents will be contacted to confirm enrollment by the end of April. All applicants will receive an email at the end of April concerning enrollment status.

Tuition for Children who are Typically Developing

The tuition for children without special needs (those who do not meet state guidelines for a full range of specialized services) for the 2020–2021 school year is:

\$300.00 per month/\$75.00 per week

Tuition is due the 1st day of each month and delinquent on the 5th of each month. If fees are not paid by the 5th of each month, a late fee of \$15.00 will be charged. Tuition is paid for the month of August on the student's first day of school.

School Year Calendar

The Preschool Program will follow the Muscle Shoals City Schools calendar. Preschool hours vary for children with IEP's depending on needed services.

Instructional hours are from 8:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Students may not be dropped off before 7:30 a.m. (NO EXCEPTIONS)!!! Students need to be picked up on time. Any student not picked up by 2:10 p.m. will be assessed a fine of \$10.00.

Meals and Snacks

Meals are not included in the monthly tuition. Lunch may be purchased at the school or may be brought from home. Free and reduced meals are available by application for those who meet the financial requirements. Students will need to bring daily snacks as they are not provided by the preschool.

Curriculum

The Muscle Shoals City Schools Preschool Program uses play-based instruction to encourage development of skills in the following areas:

- Play behavior
- Listening
- Speaking
- Self-control
- Social relationships
- Initiative
- Pre-writing
- Alphabet knowledge
- Phonological Awareness
- Print awareness and concepts
- Pre-mathematics
- Music, Movement and Drama
- Art
- Manners
- Eating and drinking skills
- Self help
- Personal hygiene
- Problem solving
- Gross motor skills
- Thinking skills
- Fine Motor/Visual discrimination skills
- Safety

Guidance/Behavior Management

The teacher incorporates positive behavior development techniques to promote proper self-control, appropriate behavior and, most importantly, positive self-image. The teacher uses approaches based on the belief that behavior is meaningful and displays a communicative intent. The staff attempts to identify the communicative intentions underlying the behavior and in turn helps the child learn more acceptable ways of communication. The following steps may be taken by the staff to assist the child in developing positive behavior:

1. If the behavior will stop on it's own and no one is harmed:
It is not necessary to intervene on every undesirable behavior, especially if it is a one time or infrequent occurrence. Use the least amount of intervention necessary will be used to enable the child to function and learn within the classroom environment. Often the natural consequences of the negative reactions of other children will be all that is necessary to shift things in a more positive direction. Staff may ignore/remove attention from inappropriate behavior.
2. If the behavior continues or someone is getting hurt:
Remove events, situations, objects, or individuals that may be facilitating the behavior will be removed from the situation. A staff member will move closer to the child who is engaged in the behavior rather than verbally calling attention to the behavior.
A student will be gently touched to redirect attention or stop a disruptive movement.
Relaxation techniques will be utilized to assist the student in calming down.
A staff member may use positive communication with the child. Time-out within the classroom and withholding privileges and/or activities may be used, as well.
3. If the behavior becomes a regular occurrence:
Many behaviors of children that are viewed as inappropriate are due to a lack of more appropriate functional skills, an absence of meaningful activities, or too much time in which the child is not engaged. Rather than attempting to address all of the child's behaviors that are considered problematic, it is important to prioritize behaviors and identify missing skills that enable the child to participate in the classroom. A decision-making process is helpful in accomplishing this important task. This first step is to determine the function the specific behavior. Family input will be obtained to assist in the development of a Behavior Intervention Plan. Typical peers are used as role models for the students who have special needs. If behavior becomes problematic and steps taken to intervene are not successful, the student may be dismissed from the program with a two-week notice.

Health

Program staff will make every effort to protect the health and safety of all children. The cooperation of parents is essential in this effort. Parents should follow the school hand book and keep their child at home when any of the following symptoms occur:

Fever of 100 degrees or greater – must be without fever for 24 hours before returning to school
Diarrhea – must be well for 24 hours before returning to school
Vomiting – must be well for 24 hours before returning to school
Severe cold
Severe headache
Rash with fever or behavioral change
Eye discharge
Mouth sores with drooling

Medical Emergencies

In the event that a child becomes ill or suffers an accident while he/she is at school, the child's parents will be notified. If the accident or illness requires medical attention, the child's parents will be called immediately. If the parents cannot be reached, the child's physician will be contacted. In an extreme emergency, paramedics will be called, and the child will be transported to the hospital when appropriate. A staff member will stay with the child until his/her parents are located.