



**“Two Peas in a Pod”
Preschool Handbook
2020-2021**

**Martensdale- St. Marys
School District**

**390 Burlington Avenue
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COVID-19 STATEMENT
(Effective 8/2020)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are certain policies within and elements of this handbook that may be temporarily suspended or altered in order to be in compliance with the District's Return to Learn and/or Return to School policies and procedures, as well as ongoing guidance from the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control, the Office of the Governor, the Iowa Department of Public Education, and other relevant agencies. Any policy or procedural change will be communicated to students and staff.

Dear Preschool Families,

Welcome to Two Peas in a Pod Preschool! We are all very excited to meet our future preschool students and welcome your family to our community! Included in this handbook is important information about Two Peas in a Pod Preschool.

Our Mission...

It is the mission of the Martensdale- St. Marys Preschool to provide an innovative learning experience for the Pre- School aged child. We will strive to ignite curiosity one child at a time by teaching the necessary skills and understandings to succeed in kindergarten and continue to thrive academically and socially throughout their lives. We plan to create this nurturing environment by encouraging early learning and individual learning styles. We are committed to providing the highest quality education to our early learners.

Standards

The Two Peas in a Pod Preschool Program...

- Standard 1: Promotes positive relationships among all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a community, and to foster each child's ability to contribute as a responsible community member.
- Standard 2: Implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive.
- Standard 3: Uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child's learning and development in the context of the program's curriculum goals.

- Standard 4: Is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on child learning and development.
- Standard 5: Promotes the nutrition and health of all children and staff and protects them from preventable illness and injury.
- Standard 6: Employs and supports a teaching staff that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and support families' diverse needs and interests.
- Standard 7: Establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child's family to foster children's development in all settings, being sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.
- Standard 8: Establishes relationships, and uses the resources of, the children's communities to support the achievement of program goals.
- Standard 9: Provides a safe and healthful environment with appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments.
- Standard 10: Implements policies, procedures, and systems that support stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences.

Enrollment

Admission Requirements:

1. A child must be 4 years old on or before September 15th.
2. Children enrolled in preschool are required to have a complete physical by a physician. Proof of immunization must be present before the child attends school.
3. Children must be toilet trained to attend Two Peas in a Pod Preschool.
4. Students will be enrolled in the following order of priority:
 - Students residing in the district
 - Students with siblings attending school in the district (district or non-district residents)
 - Students out of district
 - Birthdate (oldest students will be given priority)
5. Your child will be officially enrolled when all forms have been completed at Registration. A \$100 non-refundable registration fee will be required at this time for 4 year olds. A \$60 non-refundable fee is required for 5 year olds. In the event that your child does not meet registration qualifiers (see #4 above), the fee will be refunded.

The registration fee will be deducted from August-tuition.

All materials must be filled out and completed at registration or online. The Registration Date will be posted on the district website and in other communication in December each year.

6. We must have your address, telephone number at home, work, and cell, and a current email address, along with any child care-related information. Please be ready to provide this information at Registration. Please notify us immediately of any changes.

3 Year Olds

Students who are 3 may enroll in the 3 year old program, which meets one morning a week. (Wednesdays, 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.) The same enrollment priorities apply. (see #4 above) The registration fee for 3 year olds is \$40. The 3's will begin **Wednesday, September 2nd**.

Information regarding tuition and schedules will be available at Registration.

Hours for Three-Year-Old Students (with IEP's only)

Classes meet for approximately 2 hours each day, 2-3 days a week for students in special education. (based on the IEP) This class is integrated into our four-year-old program and follows Martensdale-St. Marys CSD calendar.

Hours for Four and Five-Year-Old Students

Classes will meet from 8:20am- 3:15pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The preschool program will follow the Martensdale-St. Marys CSD school calendar, but will begin classes **Tuesday, September 1st**. A due to scheduled home visits. Any students that are five years old by September 15, will also attend from 8:00-11:00 on Wednesday mornings.

Fees (To be updated based on 2020-2021 Calendar)

1. Tuition will be \$65/ week. The 1st week's payment is due on the 1st day of school. Payments are always due on **Friday**. You may pay monthly on the 1st of the month. Tuition for the year is \$2,275. *Students that are 5 by September 15th will attend the program for free as part of an integrated transitional-kindergarten, but will need to pay for lunches.*
2. Tuition will include an all- day educational setting for your child, lunch, milks for afternoon snack, and busing within the district.

3. Please take care of payments in the office or send them with your child to school each week in an envelope marked with their name.
4. If you choose to go on vacation or your child is sick, you are still responsible for paying for the time that your child is gone.
5. If payments fall behind by over \$150, you will be notified that your account is delinquent. If you are delinquent for over two weeks, your child will be removed from the program.
6. *Grants and scholarships are available through 4R Kids based upon need. Please contact the elementary office for more information.*

General Information

Transportation

The MSTM bus routes will be extended to offer transportation to preschool students living in the Martensdale-St. Marys School District. Seatbelts are not required when transporting students aged four and older. Contact Jill Gavin for questions regarding busing within the district at jill_gavin@mstm.us.

Daycare

Before and After School Care will be available for students and is located within the school building. If you would like to register your child for daycare, please contact Sandi Christensen at 641-344-9889 or sandi_christensen@mstm.us.

Supervision

No child is left unsupervised while attending preschool. Staff members supervise primarily by sight. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible as long as teachers check every two to three minutes on children who are out-of-sight, e.g., those who can use the toilet independently, who are in the library area, etc.

Birthdays

Birthdays are an important and significant event in the life of a child. They afford the opportunity for children to be given special recognition. We will do our best to celebrate this day on their actual birthday. Birthday invitations to parties outside of school that do not include the entire class will not be distributed at school.

Family Involvement and Responsibilities

Arrival and Departure

If you are bringing your child to school, please do not arrive before 8:05am. Parents or a legal guardian must either accompany children to the classroom at the beginning of the day or leave their child in the care of one of the teaching staff. No child is permitted to leave the building without an adult.

If your child rides the school bus to school, teaching staff go to each bus as it arrives to greet and assist the student off the bus. At dismissal, teaching staff accompany each student to the bus and assist the student onto the bus.

Preschool Advisory Committee

The Two Peas in a Pod Preschool Program has a preschool advisory committee composed of parents, school staff, and other community members interested in the preschool program. This group meets quarterly to provide feedback on services that meet children and family 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 part of the Preschool Advisory Committee.

Family Involvement and Communication

Although in-person daily contact cannot be replaced, preschool staff relies on notes home, emails, phone calls, newsletters, and bulletin boards, Blue Devil Space webpage as alternative means to establish and maintain open two-way communication. The preschool program staff invites parents/guardians to become involved in one or all of the following ways:

1. Support your child's daily transition to school by sharing information about your child's interests and abilities. Keeping the teacher informed of changes and events that might affect your child allows the teacher to be more responsive to your child's needs;
2. Attend family meetings;
3. Return all forms;
4. Attend Family/Teacher Conferences held once during the school year;
5. Take time to read the family bulletin board;
6. Check your child's backpack every day;
7. Participate in field trip activities;

8. Share some of your talents in your child's class through activities such as reading or storytelling, cooking, art, music, art, crafts, hobbies, your profession, or artifacts from trips that you have taken;
9. Share any of your families' cultural traditions, celebrations, or customs;
10. Help prepare snack and enjoy it with your child;
11. Read all the materials sent home with your child;
12. Come to play;
13. Serve on the Preschool Advisory Committee.

Home Visits

Home visits are scheduled prior to the start of preschool. 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 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 understand what your goals are for your child and whether you have any concerns you would like addressed. Parents are encouraged to share these preferences, concerns, and questions at any time with either the classroom teacher or administrator.

Family Teacher Conferences

The preschool program has formal family teacher conferences at the same time as the K-12 building in the fall and spring. At family teacher conferences, you will be able to share your new or continued goals for your child during the school year. The preschool teacher will also share your child's progress through assessments and samples of your child's work.

Health and Safety

Please be careful about sending your child to school with infections or illnesses that might disrupt or cause other children to become ill. A child must be without a fever for 24 hours before returning to school. Please notify the teacher if your child has contracted a communicable disease.

The program will follow these procedures regarding medications for all children:

- Medication, over-the-counter or prescription, will only be administered to a child when the parent or legal guardian has given written consent
- Instructions regarding the medication must be provided by licensed health care provider who has prescribed or recommended the medication, either in writing or by telephone
- The registered nurse on-site will be the only staff member administering medication to a child
- Medications must be labeled with the child's first and last names, the date the prescription was filled or the recommendation was obtained from the child's licensed health care provider, the name of the medication or the period of use of the medication, the manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of the medication, and instructions on how to administer and store it
- All medications will be kept in a locked location within the nurse's office while at school

If your child is too sick to go outside for recess, then please do not send them to school. Please dress your child in suitable clothing for indoor and outdoor play. We will use the 15/15 rule for recess. Recess is held outdoors except during inclement weather. During cold weather, if the temperature or wind chill is below 15 degrees, recess will be indoors. Tennis shoes are the best for your child to play in.

If your child has a toileting accident while at school, certain procedures will occur. A teacher or teacher's assistant will assist your child in changing into clean, dry clothes. However, due to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations, we are not allowed to clean the soiled clothing. The soiled clothing will be placed in a bag and sent home with your child.

Sunscreen and bug repellent application will be an option for your child to have for outdoor play. These items will be an option on the supply list. If you choose to have these for your child, there will be forms to sign for your approval.

Policy for Standard Precaution Procedures

- Surfaces that may come in contact with potentially infectious body fluids must be disposable or made of a material that can be sanitized

- Staff use barriers and techniques that minimize contact of mucus membranes or of opening in skin with potentially infectious body fluids and reduce the spread of infectious disease
- When spills of body fluids occur, staff clean them up immediately with detergent followed by water rinsing
- After cleaning, staff sanitize nonporous surfaces by using the procedure described in the cleaning and sanitation table
- Staff clean rugs and carpeting by blotting, spot cleaning with a detergent-disinfectant, and shampooing or steam cleaning
- Staff dispose of contaminated materials and diapers in a plastic bag with a secure tie that is placed in a closed container

Toileting

- There is an expectation for students to be toilet trained. For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the following procedures are in place:
- Diapering will only be done in the designated diaper area, i.e., the bathroom adjacent to the classroom with a changing table or pad.
- Staff checks children for signs that diapers or pull - ups are wet or contain feces at least every two hours. Diapers are changed when wet or soiled at that time and when otherwise needed.
- Staff changes 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, and 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 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

- 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.

A Child's Day

Who Works in the Preschool

Program Administrator: The elementary principal is designated as the program administrator supervising the preschool program.

Teacher: A full-time teacher licensed by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners and holding an early childhood endorsement is assigned to the preschool classroom.

Paraeducator: A full time associate is in each classroom. The associate works with students as well as carries out activities under the supervision of the teacher.

School Nurse: The preschool has the assistance of the school nurse. The nurse is employed full time. She maintains student health records and immunizations and conducts annual reviews.

Support Staff: Heartland AEA 11 support staff provides resources and assistance to the teacher and classroom upon request to help all children be successful in the preschool setting. Such staff may include: early childhood consultant, speech and language pathologist, social worker, physical therapist or others.

Inclusion

Community students join the special education preschoolers as part of an inclusive classroom. When the special education and community students are together, the special education children apply what they have learned in a generalized setting with peers. Modifications are made in the environment and staffing patterns in order to include children with special needs. Staff is aware of the identified needs of individual children and is trained to follow through on specific intervention plans. It is our belief that an inclusive program enriches the experience for teachers, students, other children, and their families.

Curriculum

Two Peas in a Pod Preschool uses the research-based *Creative Curriculum*. Some examples of areas of study are: *Welcome to School, Buildings, Clothes, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Balls, and Trees*. Teachers also plan additional studies based on student interests. Studies last an average of 5 weeks, but can be shortened or lengthened depending on student interest.

A *Creative Curriculum* classroom is a place where learning takes place through positive relationships between and among children and adults. Children are taught the skills they need for making friends, solving social problems, and sharing.

Children learn through various types of play: functional, constructive, dramatic, pretend, and games with rules. The teacher watched for opportunities to help children learn, expand their world, and master challenges.

Each child is unique, bringing specific interests, experiences, and learning styles to the classroom. The teacher uses the curriculum to address this uniqueness, making modifications and adaptations for each individual child.

Areas of Learning

There are nine main areas of development and learning that we focus on throughout the school year: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, the arts, and English language acquisition.

Assessment

Guiding Principles:

It is the school district's belief that assessment of young children should be purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and take place in the natural setting by familiar adults. The curricular goals and objectives guide teachers' ongoing assessment of children's progress. Teacher teams meet at least weekly to interpret and use the results of formative assessments for planning experiences for the children and to guide instruction. Assessment is never used to label children or to include or exclude them from a program. A family's culture and a child's experiences outside the school setting are recognized as being an important piece of the child's growth and development. All results are kept confidential, placed in each child's file, and securely stored.

Children are assessed in the following ways:

- *The Teaching Strategies GOLD™ Assessment System* is an authentic, observational assessment system used by the Two Peas in a Pod Preschool Program

The primary purposes of *The Teaching Strategies GOLD™* assessment system are to help teachers:

- Observe and document children's development and learning over time
- Support, guide, and inform planning and instruction
- Identify children who might benefit from special help, screening, or further evaluation
- Report and communicate with family members and others

The secondary purposes of *The Teaching Strategies GOLD™* assessment system are to help teachers:

- Collect and gather child outcome information as one part of a larger accountability system
 - Provide reports to administrators to guide program planning and professional development opportunities
- Families are asked to contribute information about their child's progress. Young children often show different skills in different settings. Working together, the teaching staff, and families can gather a complete picture of a child's growth and development.
 - The *Child Assessment Portfolio* is the place the teacher records and preserves important information about each child's progress. This is a record keeping tool for each child. Progress checkpoints are established three times during the year: fall, winter, and spring, at which time you will receive a copy of your child's Progress Report. At each checkpoint, the teacher reflects and takes a snapshot of how a child is progressing in relation to the objectives and dimensions of *The Creative Curriculum*, the core curriculum of the Two Peas in a Pod Preschool Program.

Program Assessment

The MSTM Community School District implements the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards. We completed our visit from the Iowa Department of Education in January of 2013 and became fully verified. Administrators, families, staff, and other routinely participating adults are involved annually in a program evaluation that measures progress towards the program's goals and objectives.

Child Guidance and Discipline

Our preschool program implements the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in all aspects of the preschool day. Below are some guiding principles of PBIS:

- Staff interact with all children and each other in a respectful manner

- Staff model turn taking and sharing as well as caring behaviors
- Staff help children negotiate their interactions with one another and with shared materials
- Staff engage children in the care of their classroom and ensure that each child has an opportunity to contribute to the group
- Staff encourage children to listen to one another and help them to provide comfort when others are sad or distressed

The children are taught social communication and emotional regulation skills. If a child displays persistent, serious, and challenging behavior the teacher staff, parents, and AEA support staff work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.

School-Wide Participation

Your child will partake in the same specials as the older grades, which includes physical education, library, music, art, and guidance counseling. In addition to participating in specials, the preschool program takes part in school-wide activities, such as The Fun Run and Leaf Raking. We also schedule times throughout the school year where we invite older students into our classroom to read to the students or do small projects together.

Afternoon Snack

Our preschool will serve an afternoon snack and milk each day. Your child will be required to bring one to two snacks a month, as requested by the teacher. Monthly snack calendars will be sent home, which will show the day your child is required to bring the afternoon snack. We encourage snacks that promote healthy nutrition. Foods that are brought from home for snack must meet the following requirements:

- All food and beverages brought from home must be labeled with the child's name and date
- Snacks must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers

Preschool staff will keep any food that requires refrigeration in the refrigerator in our classroom until it is served.

Goldfish crackers or animal crackers will be provided as an option if your child does not like the snack for the day. They will also be on hand if no snack is sent for the day.

Community Relationships

Linking with the Community

The Two Peas in a Pod Preschool Program is represented on the Warren County Empowerment Board. This associate ensures district staff is kept up to date on the child and family support services available in the community and county. Resources are shared with families of preschool students and assistance is provided as needed in locating, contacting, and using community resources that support children's and families' well-being and development. In addition, program staff identifies and establishes relationships with specialized consultants who can provide support for children with disabilities, behavior challenges, or other special needs.

MSTM NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the policy of the Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact the district's Equity Coordinator. MSTM's Equity Coordinator is Josh Moser, secondary principal. His address is MSTM Community School, 390 Burlington, Martensdale, Iowa 50160. His phone number is 641-764-2686 and his email address is: josh.moser@mstm.us