



# Preschool Handbook

## 2023-2024

Duncan Lake Early Childhood Center  
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Caledonia, MI 49316

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## **Mission Statement**

*The Duncan Lake Early Childhood Center is devoted to young children and their families. Partnering with the community, we will provide quality early childhood programs that enhance the experiences of each child for a bright and healthy future.*

## **Our Philosophy**

Our philosophy is based on the belief that children learn best in an early childhood program that provides developmentally appropriate educational experiences in an integrated setting. Our preschool programs provide a positive first school experience for young children. In this engaging environment, children learn through appropriate play experiences that encourage active participation in learning. Teachers guide, support, and teach our children developmentally appropriate play and social skills. Our aim is to build a community of learners by providing children with enriching experiences to develop self-confidence, independence, and strong cognitive and social skills. DLECC recognizes the significant relationship among teachers, students, parents, and families and encourages continuous collaboration in a climate of mutual respect, cooperation and shared responsibility.

## **Integrated Preschool Classrooms**

The Caledonia Community Schools offer integrated preschool classrooms, serving 3 and 4 year olds. An integrated preschool includes typically developing children as well as children with disabilities. These classrooms offer children the opportunity to work and play with age-appropriate peers, as well as children with developmental challenges. Children with disabilities excel in some areas, affording all children the opportunity to be models in some realm. As children work in group activities with their peers, they discover their similarities and develop a better understanding of their differences. Flexible, but consistent structure and routine are offered, including activities designed to promote language/listening skills, gross and fine motor development, and opportunities for imaginative/dramatic play. Music, sensory activities, and a wide variety of developmentally appropriate materials and activities are employed, all of which support a strong foundation for learning.

## **The Curriculum**

Based on the belief that children learn through play, active manipulation of their environment, life experiences and communicating with peers and adults, the curriculum is designed to facilitate children's involvement in their own learning. The program balances active and quiet play. Children work both alone and in small groups where teachers facilitate the children's interactions with each other and their environment. Teachers observe each child's activities in order to tailor and expand curriculum to meet individual needs and interests.

## **Daily Activities**

Our daily sessions follow a routine which becomes very comfortable for the children. In general, each session is divided into circle time, stations, choice play, and outside or gym. Daily activities include a variety of active and quiet individual and group projects, creative expression, blocks, books, games, and puzzles. The teachers, teaching assistants, and specialists work seamlessly in each class providing enriching activities while encouraging skill

development in all areas of early childhood education; cognition, fine/gross motor, social/emotional, play language, and self-help.

**Circle time** is a gathering of the children and teacher during which concepts such as daily schedule, calendar, songs and themes are introduced or reviewed. Meeting time helps reinforce a sense of classroom community, respect for others, listening and language skills, turn taking, and self-esteem. Children learn to participate in a group and how to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Children also learn to respect one another's ideas and feelings. The ability to communicate is one of the most important and essential life skills that a child can acquire. It takes time, patience, and experience to strengthen a child's ability to communicate.

**Stations** are a small group activity time. It is a time we connect themes to essential skills; writing, language, math and fine/gross motor. Children have a chance to work independently at their own pace, as well as cooperatively with others. Stations also allow the teachers to observe and work with the children individually, as well as in small groups.

**Choice time** is a time for children to explore and learn through numerous activities. Play practices enhance concentration, imagination, cooperation, and creation. It allows a child to practice grown-up behavior and develop a sense of control over one's own world.

### Special Days

Classroom parties are celebrated for: Halloween, Christmas and Valentine's Day. We also host two other special events during the year to recognize and appreciate the adults in the students' lives, as well as our center-wide Literacy Festival.

We also take field trips during the school year and parents join us in our adventures. Field trips can be an important enriching experience for our children. Teachers plan trips appropriate for their class that will provide a well-rounded experience. Information will be sent home via email each time a field trip is planned. Each parent will drive their child directly to and from the field trip destination and remain with their child for the duration of the field trip.

### Program Details

Classes are held 2 or 3 times per week, depending on your child's age and choice of session. A full list of class offerings is available on our website. Three year-old classes have a limit of 12 students. Four year-old preschool has a limit of 16 students. If your child's class is designated as a supported preschool section, the class size may be larger. In these cases, additional adults are assigned to ensure a low teacher/student ratio. Each preschool classroom is staffed with a preschool teacher, who is certified in early childhood and/or special education and teaching assistants. Additional staff members include: Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, and Physical Therapists.

### Requirements

Enrollment in our preschool requires that a child meet age requirements, which means the child needs to be of age by **September 1<sup>st</sup>**. *All children must be potty trained to attend our school.* Before the first day of school, it is necessary to have on file, in our office, a completed emergency card and health appraisal form **completely filled out by parent/guardian and health care provider.** Michigan Department of Health requires up-to-date immunization records on file at DLECC.

## Parent Involvement

We encourage parents to keep in contact with teachers and ask any necessary questions as the need occurs. Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled in fall and spring to share your child's progress and answer questions. Parents are always welcome to visit during the school year. Preschool field trips **require** adult participation by experiencing "hands on" educational activities with your child. Parents or guardians are also required to transport their child to and from off campus activities.

## Visitors

For safety purposes, any non-school personnel, including parents, must report to the front office upon arrival at the school. If you have a scheduled appointment with a staff member or are volunteering in the school, you are required to sign in and get a visitor's badge. All volunteers are required to have a background check before volunteering. Please obtain a background form from the preschool secretary. As a parent volunteer in school, you will be obligated to keep all situations you may witness confidential. This is for the protection of the children as well as for their families. If you have an important message or something to deliver to your child during the school day, please leave it with the secretary who will make sure that the child gets whatever is needed in a timely manner. This policy is meant to keep disruptions to children's learning to a minimum as well as for safety.

## Arrivals/Departures

DLECC requires that children be checked in and out every day using the Brightwheel app. This procedure ensures the safety of your child and follows state licensing requirements. This app is used to account for all children present on a daily basis, and also in the event of an emergency. If a child is going to be absent, please call the school and leave a message at 891.6220. If your child is going to be late, he or she should check in at the front desk before going to class. If a student has to leave school early for some reason, please call the front office and the teacher alerting them to the time of pick-up, who will be picking the student up, etc. During arrival and dismissal times, staff members must devote full attention to all of the children. Please keep conversations brief. If you need to communicate specific information, a written note or email is preferred.

Our faculty schedules are based on your children's schedules and state mandated teacher/child ratios. When parents are late to pick up their children it causes hardships for faculty because they are unable to leave at the end of their scheduled shift. Many teachers have classes, families and regular commitments for which they are responsible. It can also be distressing for children to be left at DLECC after dismissal. **Late pick-up is not a normal program option and should be considered an exceptional occurrence.**

## Authorized for Child's Release

Consent to pick up a student must be given via Brightwheel app. A code will be issued to the responsible party. The note should be dated, include the name of the person picking up the child, and must be signed by a parent/guardian. **Anyone picking up a child must be 18 years of age and will be required to show identification.** No child will be released without written authorization from the parent. Parents may revise their permanent Authorized Pick-Up Information at any time. If your child is going to visit a classmate directly from school, you must send a dated and signed note containing all of the details of this change.

**If a parent is denied permission to pick up a child, the parent's name must be included on the emergency form and a copy of the court order is required to be on file at DLECC.**

## Clothing

Children should come to school comfortably dressed in play clothes (paint, glue, etc. may stain clothing). Please dress your child for outdoor play as the weather changes. We also ask that you keep an extra set of **seasonal clothes** in your child's locker, in case of an accident. Please mark **all** clothing and other belongings with your child's name. We would encourage closed toe shoes with a rubber sole for safe playground access and participation in active gross motor play. Winter boots should be large enough to avoid struggling with putting them on.

At DLECC, we encourage children to be independent. Therefore, we strongly recommend a backpack that is easy for your child to manage when putting away their things. Each day your child needs to bring a backpack, clearly marked with his/her name to hold the extra clothes, art, treasures, and important communication.

## Snacks

Snack time is an opportunity for children to sit and enjoy a healthy snack. Children engage in small group discussions during this time. This is an opportunity for children to build language skills through the communication of thoughts and feelings, practice social skills and reinforce table manners. A snack is served daily. Parents are asked to periodically provide snack for their child's class. A snack sign up chart is available in each room. The exception to this are the 4 year old MWF extended and the TTh full day programs where parents supply a daily snack for their child.

Parents of children with allergies are asked to provide a supply of safe treats to be used in lieu of store bought and bakery-prepared items. Talk with your child and help him/her understand that food sharing is not allowed. This is a preventative safety measure to reduce food allergy exposures. Hand washing and tabletop washing are additional risk-reduction measures that are used at ECC. Parents can help by ensuring adequate hand and face washing at home before arrival at school. PLEASE BE AWARE THAT ECC IS USED BY OTHER GROUPS. Although we can monitor what parents and staff bring into the center, we cannot guarantee that no nuts will be brought in by other groups when the center is closed. These groups are notified of our policy, but we cannot monitor it.

## Tuition Payments

A non-refundable enrollment fee of \$75.00 for 1 child, or \$100.00 for 2 children is due upon registration of a student new to the program. Returning students will be charged a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$25.00. Payments can be made in full at the beginning of the semester, or on an installment plan. If a session is paid in full for the entire year using cash, check, or money order, we will waive the enrollment fee. We accept cash, check, money order, and PayPal. Tuition is the only means of income for preschool. **On-time payments are required. DLECC reserves the right to terminate enrollment should an account become overdue by 30 days.**

## Withdrawals

Parents may withdraw their children at any time, but are encouraged to notify staff in advance. **Students who are withdrawn from the program cannot be eligible for a refund, if they choose to voluntarily leave.**

## School Closing and Delays

There are certain days built into the preschool calendar that are predetermined days off (professional development, holidays, etc.) and are not made up.

School closings and delays are made to assure the safety of children. You must make your own judgment about driving in hazardous weather situations. If bad weather begins and you wish to pick your child up early, please feel free to do so. The decision to close because of snow or other emergency is in accordance with the Caledonia Community Schools. In the event of snow or other emergency, please note the following:

- If Caledonia Community Schools are closed, DLECC will be closed, please note there will be no make up for days we have to close.
- If Caledonia Community Schools are delayed 2 hours, there will be **NO a.m. preschool**, however, afternoon preschool will run their regular schedule.
- If Caledonia Community Schools are delayed 2 hours, **extended day preschool or all day preschool will begin session at 11:00 a.m.**, with an abbreviated day ending at **regular dismissal times**.
- If Caledonia Community Schools close early due to snow or other emergency, DLECC will close early. Parents will be contacted.
- School closings are communicated on local radio and TV stations.

## Crisis and Emergency Plans

Please note that during inclement weather, if you want to pick up your child early, you are encouraged to do so. **Parents must come to the school office** and sign out their child early. Parents **may NOT** go directly to the classroom. A Student Information Form is included in the enrollment packet and should be filled out carefully by parents and caregivers. It is very important for parents to keep the school informed of any changes to phone numbers (work, home, cell, and emergency contacts), address, daycare schedules, etc. During an emergency, time is crucial so current data is essential to make sure your child arrives home safely.

## Tornado and Fire Emergency Information

Tornado Watch: Children will continue activities while conditions are monitored.

Tornado Warning: Children will be escorted to designated areas in the building and will remain there until all clear.

Fire: Children will be evacuated from the building to a predetermined area via evacuation routes. Everyone will remain outside until cleared to re-enter the building.

## School Health

The major goal of our school health program is to protect and promote the health of children within the preschool environment. School health records provide a confidential record of each child's health status. The information that we gather about your child's health status enables us to identify children with special health care needs and to develop a health care plan that anticipates possible emergency situations. A health appraisal form completed on both sides by parent and health care professional, including up-to-date immunization records is to be turned in **before** a child can start preschool at DLECC. Health appraisals must be dated within 12 months of when school starts. Parents are asked to supply an updated immunization record if a student receives immunizations during the school year.

## Illness Guidelines

Here are some guidelines that might be helpful in keeping your child as healthy as possible. As you know, preschoolers do not have the same kind of self-care skills for a cold or infection as older children. Also, young children can be in very close contact with each other while they play. This information will help you in deciding when to keep your child home:

- Cold: Continuous nasal discharge, cough, watery eyes which developed within the past 24-48 hours is considered contagious.
- Fever: Must be fever free for **24 hours** before returning to school, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Vomiting/Diarrhea: Keep at home for **24 hours after symptoms have resolved** and the child can keep food and fluids down.
- Strep Throat: Must wait **24 hours after antibiotics have begun**
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): If conjunctivitis is diagnosed, your child will be prescribed eye ointment and **should not return to school for 24 hours after medicine has begun**.
- Head Lice: Please inform us immediately if your child has lice. We are required by licensing to follow certain procedures regarding the cleaning and removal of materials within a classroom with lice. We also reserve the right to implement additional procedures, such as head checks by our staff. Your child may return to school after the lice has been treated.
- Rash – Any unidentified rash should be checked by a doctor. Children may return to school when a doctor has determined the rash is not contagious.
- Cough – A cough that is hoarse or excessive should be investigated by a physician.
- Nasal Discharge – A thick, yellowish or green nasal discharge when accompanied by a fever.

In addition, if your child is mildly ill, but is irritable and cannot fully participate in the day's program, they should remain at home. If a child appears ill at school, the staff will call you to come and pick up your child as soon as possible. Children who get sick at school shall rest in the office while they wait for their parent to pick them up. We can't prevent all illnesses, but if we work together we can minimize the spread of germs. It is very important to keep the preschool classroom teacher aware and up to date on any medical conditions, and/or medications your child is taking.

Teachers, para pros, and volunteers are expected to remain home if they have a temperature over 100 degrees, or are contagious. If a staff member gets sick while at school, a substitute will be found to cover their position, and they will be sent home.

### MINOR INJURIES: (cuts, bruises, bumps)

Minor first aid (ice, bandage, etc.) will be administered after injury and parent will be notified.

### MAJOR INJURIES:

9-1-1 will be called in a life-threatening emergency. In the event of an accident requiring medical attention, the parent will be contacted immediately. If we are unable to reach a parent, we will contact the next person on the child's emergency call list. An accident report will be completed and a copy will be given to the parents.

## Medications

Medication, prescription and non-prescription, will be given to children by an adult staff member. Prior written permission to give medication must be obtained. Medication Authorization forms are available in the office. This form must be filled out correctly, signed by both the parent and the child's doctor, and returned to the office. Prescription medicine must be in the container labeled by the pharmacy with the child's name and dosage, and at least one dose of the medicine must be given at home prior to coming to school. Nonprescription medications must be in the original container labeled with directions for dosage. A parent must provide a dispenser for administering medicine.

## Discipline Policy

### Positive Behavior Supports:

Duncan Lake Early Childhood Center is **United in Caring, Kindness, and Safety (DUCKS)**. Classes learn to practice these expectations in the classroom, hallways, cafeteria, and the playground. Positive reinforcement encourages positive behaviors.

The goal of discipline is to assist and guide the children in the development of self-control. Teachers will discipline in a consistent way, based on an understanding of varying developmental levels. Simple and understandable rules will be established so that expectations and limitations will be clearly defined. We strive to provide the most harmonious environments, but in the event that the teachers must intervene, we have outlined our most common techniques.

- **Environmental:** By strategically setting up the classroom and staff positioning themselves at key points throughout the room, certain conflicts can be avoided.
- **Redirection:** Teachers attempt to redirect or divert children's attention to another toy, area, or activity in an attempt to avoid confrontation.
- **Language Encouragement:** Often conflict arises and heightens due to young children's limited vocabulary. Teachers may step in and help provide appropriate words to assist in solving a conflict and give children a few minutes to compose themselves.

*At no time do teachers use physical punishment, shaming or withholding of food or bathroom privileges.*

## Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about differences, and the ability to learn and **build** on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. At DLECC, we believe that it is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our community special.

## Unusual Circumstances

If there are any unusual circumstances at home, such as illness or death, parents' vacations, or changes in childcare arrangements (such as a new nanny or babysitter), please notify the teachers so that they can help your child adjust more easily to the situation.

## Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

In compliance with Board of Education Policy and State statute, professional staff members are required to report to the proper authorities any sign of child abuse or neglect.



## **Handling Bodily Fluids/Universal Precautions**

DLECC will use precautions when handling potential exposure to blood, including blood containing body fluids and tissue discharges, and when handling other potentially infectious fluids. The OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) model exposure plan will be used. Our staff has completed Blood Borne Pathogens Training.

### **Hand Washing Procedure**

Hands shall be washed with soap under running water. The following are **not approved** substitutes for soap and running water:

- Hand sanitizers
- Water basins
- Pre-moistened cleansing wipes

The following procedures are considered **best practice** for hand washing:

- Have a clean single service towel available.
- Turn on the water to a comfortable temperature.
- Moisten hands with water and apply soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously until a soapy lather appears and continue for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse
- Dry thoroughly

### **Cleaning and Sanitizing**

The following steps are to be followed for cleaning and sanitizing;

- Wash the surface or article vigorously with warm water and detergent.
- Rinse the surface with clean water.
- Submerge, wipe or spray the surface or the article with a sanitizing solution.
- Let the article or surface air dry.



## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

### ***DEGAGE MINISTRIES OPEN DOOR***

(616) 454-1661  
144 S. Division Ave.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

### ***IN THE IMAGE***

(616) 456-6150  
1823 S. Division  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

### ***THE SALVATION ARMY***

Booth Family Services  
(616) 459-9468

### ***HOLY FAMILY PARISH-ACCESS SIX***

(616) 891-9259  
9669 Kraft Ave., SE  
Caledonia, MI 49316

### ***MEL TROTTER MINISTRIES***

(616) 454-8249  
255 Commerce Ave., SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

**Kent County** – accesskent.com

**MI Child** – www.michigan.gov/michild

**Michigan Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222**

**Legal Assistance Center** (616) 632-6014

**MI Migrant Legal Assistance Project** (616) 454-5055

**West Michigan Legal Services** (616) 774-0672

**Pine Rest** (616) 455-5000 or (616) 455-9200

**Western MI University – Center for Counseling** (616) 771-4171

**YWCA Domestic Violence Services** (616) 459-4652

**MI BRIDGES** (888) 642-7434 – State Emergency Relief (SER)

<https://www.mibridges.michigan.gov>

**MI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES** – <http://www.michigan.gov/dhs>

**UNITED WAY 2-1-1:** phone, dial 211. Emergency assistance or information from nonprofit human service agencies.

## **PROGRAMS OFFERED AT DLECC:**

Free Developmental Inventory – 616.891.6220

Early Intervention - Birth to 3 yrs – 616.891.6220, ext. 7000

Bright Beginnings – Dawn Ress – 616.890.1707 – DawnRess@KISD.org

YMCA Childcare – 616.891.6223