

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Skinner West's Universal Preschool! Below is an overview of procedures and information pertaining to our program. Please print and keep for your reference throughout the year.

My name is Julie Rzadzki-Kendall (Mrs. Kendall) and I am one of the preschool teachers at Skinner West. Before my time here, I briefly taught at LaSalle II as a Preschool Special Ed. Teacher in a blended preschool program. I also previously worked for the Chicago Park District, teaching early childhood classes and overseeing camp programs. I live in the Kenwood area with my husband and three daughters. If I am not enjoying my time with them, I am most likely working out at Shred 415, I love it!

I have a Master degree in Early Childhood Education from DePaul University and I am also endorsed in Early Childhood Special Education and teaching English as a Second Language. I've completed additional coursework for positive behavior management and fostering comprehensive social emotional learning as well.

I truly believe in maintaining a strong parent-teacher relationship. Therefore, always feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Email is the most direct mode of communication, and I will make every effort to respond quickly, typically within 24 hours. I will be joined in the classroom with one teacher assistant, and our class size will cap at 20 students.

Our program follows Skinner's K-8 bell schedule 8:45-3:45. Therefore, please arrive no later than 9:00 a.m., as attendance will be taken shortly afterwards. If you have not arrived by then, your child will be marked absent. Days off and breaks will follow the CPS calendar for holiday observations, breaks, and student non-attendance days. **This includes School Improvement, Teacher Development, and Report Card Days.**

On regular school days, students will engage in academic lessons, art and physical activities, breakfast (CPS provides for free), lunch (CPS provides for free), snack (you provide for your child each day), and quiet/nap time. If your child still naps, we will provide a cot for them. Please send them

with a nap mat or blanket every Monday. Blankets will be sent home each Friday for cleaning.

Children that do not nap are asked to have relaxing, quiet time.

As mentioned above, breakfast and lunch are provided for every student by CPS, although you are welcome to bring them from home if you choose. **Please notify the teachers if your child has any dietary restrictions or allergies.** Snack is *not* provided by CPS, therefore, you must provide one from home. Please send your child with nut-free food that does not require heating or cooling as we do not have access to refrigerators or microwaves for students. There will be a large bin outside our classroom for your child to put their lunch in each day. Also, please send your child with a *filled* bottle of water each day. They will be kept in the classroom for your child to drink as needed. Please remember to label lunch boxes and water bottles!

Students will have a cubby located outside of the classroom to keep personal belongings and additional clothes. Toys and other non-school related items should be kept in backpacks, unless the class is having 'Show and Tell Day'. Show and Tell will occur every Friday after lunch. Students will have time to play with the items after every child has had a turn sharing.

The class follows the Creative Curriculum, which provides the study topics, learning activities, and curriculum pacing for lessons. Although the students will use various graphic organizers, (i.e., blank bar graphs, T-Charts, Venn Diagrams, etc.) they will not use traditional preschool worksheets. The lessons and activities in the classroom are typically hands-on and interactive, which requires much more application of knowledge and cognitive demand than a traditional worksheet. You will receive newsletters and pictures of activities throughout the year as well. Please check your spam account and update us if any changes to your email or contact information should occur.

Many of the learning activities completed throughout the year will focus on a "study" topic the students and teachers investigate. Mathematics, literacy, science, and art concepts are integrated into the study lessons. These lessons will include student data collections, journaling, phonemic awareness, independent writing, mathematical concepts, and the arts to support learning.

This is a rigorous program, recognizing each child's unique developmental and academic capabilities. However, we will work to ensure each child has a supported and enjoyable learning experience. Additionally, you will receive learning extensions to do at home each week as well. Although these are for your child's benefit, they are not required to be returned unless you and your child would like to bring them back to share. A large majority of your child's work will be done in their journals (please see supply list) and kept in school in a binder (please see supply list). These will be returned to you at the end of the year.

Work is kept in binders at school to create an organized, sequential compilation of your child's progress throughout the year. You can always peruse the binders during drop off or pick up, although, please keep them in the classroom. They will be located in the bookshelf closest to our main classroom door.

The class will go on field trips throughout the year as well. Parent chaperones are invited and encouraged to join, however, you must complete CPS' volunteer application prior to volunteering. It is a fairly simple application, although verification from CPS may take time. If you think you would like to join the class in any capacity, please complete this as soon as possible. Once you apply, you will get an email notification from CPS with your status. Once approved, you will need to bring the email notification and an ID to the main office to complete the process.

To help encourage positive behaviors and social interactions, each student will have an opportunity to earn "positive performer sticker points" each day. They may cash their stickers in at the end of the week for a prize. These points act as a tangible form of positive reinforcement for students. Students earn a point when they demonstrate a desirable trait(s), such as kindness, compassion, empathy, responsibility, friendliness, cooperation, courtesy, etc. Every Friday afternoon, your child and a teacher will count their stickers to see if they have earned 10. Every 10 stickers earns a prize, and leftover stickers carry over each week. Therefore, if your child earned 15, they have earned a prize because they had 10 stickers to cash in, plus they have 5 stickers that will carry over to the next week. Stickers will never be taken away, as your child earned that point for demonstrating a smart choice.

We cannot take away or negate that moment of positivity, even if a student might make a poor choice in another moment.

The class will also celebrate birthdays throughout the year. You are welcome to bring a store-bought, but-free snack or treat bag for your child to share for their birthday (summer birthdays can be celebrated on their half birthday or at the end of the school year, you can decide). Parents are welcome to join the class during the celebration, although please talk to your child about your plan to either leave them in school, or take them home early once the party is finished. This can create a difficult transition for students if they expect to leave early with you, but you intend on having them stay after you leave.

Lastly, teachers will frequently take pictures to document your child's experience throughout the school year. Please sign the linked *Student Media Consent Form*, either consenting or declining for the teachers to take photos of your child. These photos will be posted in the classroom, used on our private app, Homeroom, sent via email to parents in the program within newsletters, and used to create a photo-journal (you will receive at the end of the year). I am eager and excited to start the school year with you and your family!

As always, feel free to contact me should you have any questions!

Mrs. Kendall