Dear PreK Family Member,

We welcome you and your child to the prekindergarten program of the Waco Independent School District. The experience of this memorable year will be exciting and rewarding. We look forward to working with you as a team to support your child’s social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic development.

The staff of the Waco ISD has prepared this handbook that highlights basic information and suggestions that can help you and your child as you begin the prekindergarten year. Best wishes for a successful school year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Konrad,
Coordinator Early Childhood Education

Ms. Yolanda Williams
Executive Director Elementary Education

Nondiscrimination Policy

The Waco Independent School District, as an equal opportunity educational provider and employer, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, or genetic information in educational programs or activities that it operates or in employment matters. The District is required by Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as Board policy not to discriminate in such a manner. For information or complaints regarding compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Title IX, contact Waco ISD Executive Director of Human Resources at 254-755-9473 and/or Waco ISD Director of Athletics, at 254-745-2250. For information or complaints regarding compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Title VI and Title VII, as amended, contact Waco ISD Executive Director of Human Resources at 254-755-9473. For information or complaints regarding compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Section 504 or the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, contact Waco ISD Section 504 Coordinator at 254-755-9473 or; P.O. Box 27, Waco, TX, 76703.
PREKINDERGARTEN PHILOSOPHY

The prekindergarten program in the Waco Independent School District has been developed within the Texas Education Agency guidelines. The program is uniquely adapted to meet the needs and interests of the prekindergarten child.

The prekindergarten program is designed to promote children’s knowledge and skills in all developmental areas—cognitive, social/emotional, and physical—and to establish a foundation for lifelong learning.

The Prekindergarten Guidelines developed by the Texas Education Agency in Language and Early Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Physical Development, Health and Safety, Personal/Social-emotional Development, and Technology Applications are educational objectives within the program. The prekindergarten program reflects the belief that children are active learners. They build meaning and understanding through full participation in their learning environments. This child-centered program combines high expectations for each child with respect for individual development.

The Waco ISD implements Conscious Discipline which is a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates social-emotional learning and discipline. Conscious Discipline integrates classroom management with social-emotional learning, utilizing everyday events as the curriculum and addressing the adult's emotional intelligence as well as the child's. Conscious Discipline empowers adults to consciously respond to daily conflict, transforming it into an opportunity to teach critical life skills to children.

The Waco ISD Prekindergarten program is designed to include important educational objectives in the daily routine, to ensure the learning focus is relevant to the students, and to provide intentional instruction in a playful, joyful atmosphere.
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Waco ISD prekindergarten program provides a learning environment that affords each child opportunities to develop:

- self-confidence through successful learning experiences;
- responsibility for one’s own behavior;
- positive attitudes toward learning;
- a sense of responsibility for completing assigned tasks;
- the ability to share and cooperate with others;
- language / literacy skills and strategies;
- mathematical thinking about patterns and relationships, order and predictability, and logic and meaning
- the ability to observe, explore, discover, predict, and solve problems through concrete learning experiences;
- an understanding of the many aspects of their cultural and environmental world;
- health-promoting habits and routines;
- physically through use of large and small muscle activities;
- aesthetic expression and appreciation through art, music and dramatic play;
- the natural curiosity young children use to make sense of their world;
- the early concepts and skills that build the foundation for the Waco ISD Kindergarten Curriculum.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Texas Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines

Language and Early Literacy
During the prekindergarten years, children’s experiences with communication and literacy begin to form the basis for their later school success. Given adequate opportunities to interact with responsive adults and peers in language and print-rich environments, young children develop vocabulary, extended language skills, and knowledge of the world around them. They develop listening comprehension and phonological awareness; understanding of the everyday functions of print; motivation to read; appreciation for literary forms; and print awareness and letter knowledge. They learn what books are and how to use them. Understanding the value of literacy as a means of communication, as well as coming to enjoy reading, are accomplishments typical of the future good reader.

Prekindergarten educators should provide opportunities to promote language and literacy learning in children who speak a language other than English. The Texas Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines outline language and literacy accomplishments for three- and four-year-old children in their native language. For students whose first language is other than English, the native language serves as the foundation for English language acquisition. Specific guidelines for the language and literacy development of prekindergarten children whose home language is not English in English-only settings are addressed in the guidelines.
Mathematics
Mathematics learning builds on children’s curiosity and enthusiasm, and challenges children to explore ideas about patterns and relationships, order and predictability, and logic and meaning. Consequently, quality instruction occurs in environments that are rich in language, encourage children’s thinking, and nurture children’s explorations and ideas. These ideas include the concepts of number, pattern, measurement, shape, space, and classification.

Science
Young children are natural scientists. They are eager to discover all they can about the world in which they live. In prekindergarten, children participate in simple investigations that help them begin to develop the skills of asking questions, gathering information, communicating findings, and making informed decisions. Using their own senses and common tools, such as a hand lens, students make observations and collect information. Through these processes, prekindergarten children learn about their world.

Children enter the prekindergarten classroom with many conceptions about the natural and constructed world—ideas that they have gained from prior experiences. Meaningful science learning experiences help children investigate those pre-existing ideas while building a foundation for additional knowledge. These meaningful experiences increase children's understanding of the natural world, living things, cycles, change, and patterns—concepts that organize the learning of science.

Social Studies
Social studies concentrate on the nature of people and their world, the heritage of the past, and contemporary living and culture. The social studies are both integral to young children’s lives and of great interest to them. Driven by a desire to know and achieve mastery over self and their environment, children are eager to gain understanding of the many aspects of their cultural and environmental world. Through social studies, children begin to develop the self-understanding that will serve as a foundation for learning about others and the world around them. Although all aspects of education have the goal of preparing children to become contributing members of society, social studies are particularly well suited to foster the skills and attitudes necessary for participation in a democracy. Skills such as problem solving, decision-making, and working independently and with others in a classroom prepare children to become fully-functioning citizens.

Fine Arts
Young children express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings using a variety of symbols. Through their art, music, and dramatic play, children actively engage in representing what they know and how they think, using problem-solving strategies to express ideas in different forms. The fine arts enhance children’s ability to interpret symbols and are associated with growth in all areas of development, including academic learning.

Health and Safety
Young children learn health-promoting habits and routines in prekindergarten. In these early years, they develop basic concepts, attitudes, and skills about nutrition, safety, hygiene, and physical activity that contribute to their well being. Children’s experiences with their health and discovery of ways to improve it enhance their desire and ability to make wise decisions for healthy living in the future.

Personal and Social Development
Prekindergarten children develop personal and social skills that enable them to function well within the social setting of the classroom. Children develop a sense of who they are and their capabilities, and establish positive relationships with others, which enables them to effectively participate in class and community to accomplish meaningful tasks.
Physical Development
Movement is at the center of young children’s lives. Prekindergarten children participate in experiences that foster fundamental motor and movement skills, such as walking and running, which are necessary for participation in games and sports throughout life. They begin to develop gross motor skills that involve throwing, catching, and kicking, and fine motor skills that involve greater precision and accuracy of movement.

Technology Applications
Young children have much to gain from the use of technology. In prekindergarten, they expand their ability to acquire information, solve problems, and communicate with others. Regular access and exposure to computers and related technology can enhance this learning. Children use engaging, age-appropriate, and challenging software, and technology to extend their knowledge and to enrich their learning of curriculum content and concepts. These technologies serve as important learning tools and are integrated throughout the instructional program.

Children learn the basic functions of the computer and related technologies. They develop techniques for handling and controlling various input devices, and become increasingly confident and independent users of age-appropriate software programs.

Complete Texas Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines Document
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/early/prekguide.html

A TYPICAL DAY
Welcome/Arrival: Your child must be signed in and out every day in Jump Start classrooms.
Breakfast: We encourage your child to eat breakfast at school, if you get them there before 8:00 am.
Circle Time: Your child meets with classmates to unite, connect and make commitments for the day. Students are engaged in writing, language and mathematics instruction.
Work Time: Children choose from activities in the centers which include dramatic play, blocks, art, sensory table, library, ABC, writing, math/science, and computers. Learning is child-centered through play facilitated by the staff.
Clean Up: Your child learns the importance of concluding activities, putting away materials and cooperating with others.
Small Group Instruction: Children receive intentional instruction on targeted objectives in a small group setting. Students are taught language, literacy, and mathematic concepts and skills through a variety of instructional strategies.
Outdoor Learning / Activity Time: Energetic outdoor play provides opportunities for children to develop large muscles, to engage in social interactions, and to experience nature. Children also learn self-management by following rules and safety guidelines.
Music and Movement: Your child will experience music and physical activities in the classroom and during the outdoor learning time. Learning to follow rules and safety guidelines as well as building large motor skills will accompany the fun students enjoy.
Story Time: Teachers read to children in both large and small groups. Reading enhances listening comprehension, stimulates thought-provoking questions and conversation, and develops concepts of print and vocabulary.
Dismissal: Children are encouraged to review the day’s events and independently collect their belongings. Parents will be required to sign their children out at the end of the day in Jump Start classrooms.
LEARNING CENTERS
Prekindergarten uses the center approach to learning. Centers are areas with educational materials that provide opportunities for different types of learning during Work Time. The Waco ISD Pre-K curriculum provides for the following Centers to be incorporated in the daily schedule.

In the **CONSTRUCTION/BLOCK CENTER** children:
• develop eye-hand coordination
• explore spatial relationships
• compare sizes and shapes
• develop large and small muscle coordination
• learn how to work and plan together
• become aware of organizing and measuring
• become aware of problem-solving techniques

In the **ART CENTER** children learn:
• creativeness through planning, designing, and constructing an idea
• a satisfactory way of expressing ideas, impressions, and feelings
• experimentation with color, shapes, sizes, various textures, and configurations
• eye-hand coordination and better fine muscle control for later writing skills
• respect for the artistic expressions of others
• to develop their visual and tactile skills

In the **COMPUTER CENTER** children learn:
• to develop eye-hand coordination
• to develop language
• to learn cooperation
• to practice listening carefully to directions
• to solve problems

At the **LIBRARY AND WRITING CENTER** children learn:
• to respect and care for books
• to imagine events and situations
• storytelling and dictate stories
• an interest in words and books
• sequencing of pictures
• the sequence of a story
• left-to-right progression
• the interpretation of pictures and details of pictures

In the **DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER** children:
• have the opportunity to develop self-confidence through role-playing
• can act out familiar situations, assume family roles, and work out problems and concerns
• develop muscle coordination, oral language skills, and math readiness

In the **MATH CENTER** children learn:
• to develop perceptual discrimination by shape, size, color, directions, detail and design
• to recognize, describe and name shapes
• to recognize patterns and relationships among objects
• to classify objects and explain how the grouping was done
• one-to-one correspondence
• how to make comparisons and to see relationships of concrete objects
In the **SCIENCE CENTER** children learn:
- to explore the natural and mechanical world
- to observe orderly sequences and sequences of life processes
- to formulate and evaluate predictions
- to observe the relationships between and among sizes
- to gather simple data and to draw conclusions
- to develop visual and tactile senses
- methods of classifications to sort materials

**SAFETY AND SECURITY INFORMATION**

**Safety To and From School**
Whether your child rides in a car, a day care center's bus, or walks, be sure that your child is clearly aware of the safety rules associated with that type of transportation. Your ongoing communication with your child regarding safety issues reinforces these important concepts.

**Photography**
Signed permission forms as found in the WISD Student Handbook for photos, videotapes, etc. for publicity must be on hand in the school office.

**Dismissal**
Each school has a well-defined dismissal procedure. You will receive details from your child’s teacher or principal regarding arrival and dismissal procedures. Please follow these procedures consistently to keep everyone safe. Your child’s safety is our first priority, and we appreciate you following the procedures.

**ATTENDANCE INFORMATION**

**Attendance**
Your child must attend class regularly for optimum learning. Every child, once enrolled in public school, must adhere to the law established by the state legislature regarding school attendance. The same law governs preschool students as school-age students. All vacations and trips should be taken during school holidays or during the summer.

If it is necessary for your child to be absent, please call the school office that day to report the absence. Upon return to school, send a note stating why your child was absent.

**Tardiness**
Teachers begin their school day promptly in order to maximize the instructional time.

**HEALTH AND MEDICAL INFORMATION**

**Severe Illness and Hospitalization**
When a child is hospitalized or ill for an extended period of time, contact the teacher and the school nurse. Teachers enjoy close relationships with students, and they like to send get-well messages when children are in the hospital or ill for a lengthy time.

**Illness**
A child with any of the following conditions should not be in school:
- fever or vomiting within the past 24 hours
- diarrhea
- undiagnosed skin or eye irritation
• symptoms of any other illness or condition not diagnosed by a doctor

Medication
Medication must be kept in the office and shall be administered to a student in the school office under the following conditions:
• Only medication that cannot be scheduled for other than school hours may be given.
• All prescription medication must be in the original container and have a prescription label.
• Nonprescription medicine must be in the original container/bottle labeled with the child’s name, the name of the medication, and explicit instructions for giving.
• All medication must be brought to school by the parent/guardian and must be stored in the school office. Students are not allowed to keep medication anywhere in the classroom area.
• A written request on a Waco ISD medication request form to administer the medication from the parent or guardian must accompany all medication.
• Any unused medication shall be destroyed two weeks after the dosage if not otherwise instructed by the parent. Medication will not be sent home with a student. It may be picked up by the parent at the school office.

CLOTHING
Appropriate Clothing for School
Prekindergarten children need to wear clothing and shoes which allow for easy movement. It is advisable that your child dress in clothing that is easily washed since much time is spent painting and sitting on the floor. Clothing should be easy for your child to remove for bathroom purposes. Please see that your child's clothing is appropriate for the weather and that shoes are worn to protect feet.

Change of Clothing (Label All Clothing)
Occasionally accidents do happen. For this reason, please send a change of clothing (shirt, underwear, pants, and socks) in a clear plastic bag with your child's name written on the outside of the bag.

Backpack
Your child needs to bring a school bag or backpack every day. Considerations for this backpack are:
• We suggest your child practice opening and closing the backpack prior to the first day of school so he/she can independently work the zippers and/or snaps.
• The backpack should be large enough to carry student work and class folder.
• Please write your child’s name on the backpack.
• We discourage students bringing toys from home to school.
• Please empty your child’s backpack every day.
• For children’s safety, backpacks with wheels are discouraged.
REPORTING TO PARENTS

Parent conferences are held twice a year, in the fall and spring at the campus. The conference is an opportunity to report your child's progress, and for the teacher and the parents to get acquainted. The teacher and parent discuss how they can work together to enable the child to have a successful school year. You are encouraged to attend these scheduled conferences.

COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS

- Any notes or money from you should be pinned onto your child’s clothing or placed in your child’s backpack. Please ask your child’s teachers about the preferred method used in her classroom.
- Please immediately advise the teacher when there is a change of address, phone number, or emergency number.
- Please advise us if there is a change (hospital, illness, death, divorce, trip, new baby, etc.) in your home. It will be kept confidential. These events do affect your child’s class performance.

DISCIPLINE

Our school’s discipline plan is based on respect for others. Students are guided to make good choices. The teachers will communicate with you about your child’s successes and areas for growth in this ongoing process.

VOLUNTEERING

We encourage classroom volunteers. If you have a special talent or hobby that you would like to share with our class, please let us know. It can be a marvelous learning experience for children when one shares painting, weaving, cooking, sewing, or a special collection. Please contact your child’s teacher if you would like to help at school. A Waco ISD Volunteer Form and Criminal History Check are required according to WISD policy. If you do not have a Social Security Number, please contact the office for the alternative procedure. Allow ten working days for clearance and then check with office staff.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

STUDENT ADMISSION

As a public school system, the Waco schools welcome all students who live within the boundaries of the Waco Independent School District and meet state age, eligibility, and health requirements. Students moving into the district during the summer should call their school to register before the start of the school year. Students who move into the district during the school year should make an appointment to enroll.

The natural parent, legal guardian or other person having legal control under a court order must enroll a student. (Any person who is not the natural parent or is not designated guardian of the child by a court order must register with the office of Student Services prior to enrolling the student). The person enrolling the student must present their driver’s license or department of transportation identification card at the time of registration.
Records necessary to enroll are:

- Birth Certificate or Passport
- Proof of Income
- Current Immunization Record Signed by a Physician
- Proof of Residency in Waco ISD (natural gas or electricity bill, original lease agreement, or approved Certificate of Eligibility to Enroll form)
- Social Security Card (if available; if not, the student will be assigned a State ID number)
- Parent’s Driver’s License or Texas Department of Transportation ID card or Guardian Information Form and Guardian’s Driver’s License or Texas Department of Transportation ID card (if parent or guardian is not a licensed driver in Texas nor has the person obtained a TXDOT ID card, other photo ID will be considered in combination with a birth certification).
- Department of Defense ID if student is a military dependent
- During the enrollment process, students who speak a language other than English may require language assessment before the enrollment process is completed.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Ways for Parents to Support Learning

- Go to the library.
- Read stories daily.
- Go to the park or explore your backyard.
- Do simple cooking projects with your child.
- Give your child opportunities to help you at home.
- Play with your child.
- Limit TV and video games.
- Teach your child to take good care of toys and put them away.
- Encourage good health habits (washing hands with soap, proper use of tissue, brushing teeth, etc.).
- Eat healthy foods.
- Schedule an appropriate bedtime.
- Invite a friend to play.
- Display your child's work.
- Listen to and talk with your child.
- Provide writing materials (crayons, markers, pencils, paper, and cards).
- Show your child how you write to create lists and notes.
- Encourage exploration of different art media (paint, Play-Doh, tissue paper, construction paper, glue, and scissors)
- Attend parent education opportunities provided at each campus.