



An environment of discovery  
for young children

# **PARENT HANDBOOK**

## **2020 - 2021**



Dear VPS Families & Friends,

Welcome and thank you for choosing Valley Preschool to be part of your child(ren)'s educational foundation! This year we celebrate Valley's 50<sup>th</sup> year! With our recent earning of a 4-star Parent Aware rating (in which Valley out-performed other schools in all three domain areas), we are *proud* to continue to build on years of tradition continuing to provide **quality early childhood education** to each and every family that enters the building lovingly known as, "The Little Blue Schoolhouse."

This year we will strive to provide meaningful early learning experiences for your child. No doubt there will be many giggles and laughs (and maybe even a few tears...it's all part of the growing process). But one thing is for sure: you, as parents, are the experts on your child's development. Therefore, we ask that you communicate openly with us every step of the way. Let us know what's happening in the life of your little learner. And as always, we welcome your insight and encourage you to share your observations and concerns with us at any point.

In the 2020-2021 Parent Handbook you will find information on important school policies as well as information on everything from birthday treats to school closings due to bad weather. Changes are made from year to year so please take time to read it from cover to cover. Then be sure to *sign & return the Parent Agreement*, found on the last page. This signed agreement is needed for your child's school file.

On behalf of the entire teaching staff here at Valley Preschool, we look forward to partnering with you to make this school year a most successful and productive year for your child!

Your Partner in Education,

Sarah Peterson, Director  
Valley Preschool  
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**Contents**

Valley Preschool Philosophy.....4  
History.....5  
Hours of Operation / Class Offerings.....5  
Extended Day Care.....5  
Registration.....6  
Entrance Requirements.....6  
Tuition.....7  
Arrival and Departure.....7-8  
Promptness.....8  
Authorization for Pick Up.....8  
Car Tags.....9  
Illness .. 9-10  
Emergencies and Accidents.....9  
Medication Policies.....10  
Administering Topical Ointment/Lotion/Powder.....11  
Safety, First Aid and Prevention.....11  
Clothing.....11  
Snacks.....11-12  
Birthday Treats at School.....12  
Out-of-School Birthday Parties.....12  
Water Bottles.....13  
Lunch Bunch.....13  
Rest Time.....14  
Toys.....14  
Pets.....14  
Field Trips.....14  
School Closings.....15  
Parent Staff Communications  
    All-School Announcements.....15  
    Class-Specific Information.....15  
    Calling the School.....16  
    Email Communication.....16  
    General.....16  
    Social Media.....16  
    Reporting Absences.....16  
Open Door Policy and Observations.....16  
Conferences.....17  
Child Observations & Assessments..... 17-18  
Parent Participation.....18  
VPS Parent Group.....18  
Photo Release Opt Out.....18  
Public Relations Activities.....18  
Research Involving Minors.....19  
Experimental Procedures.....19  
Confidential Data Information.....19  
Grievance Procedure.....19  
Behavior Guidance Policy.....20  
Mandatory Reporting Policy.....21  
Family Support Services.....21  
Social Media.....21  
Insurance.....21  
Annual Review of Policies and Procedures.....21  
**Appendix**  
Snack Policy.....22  
2020-2021 Parental Agreement.....23

## Valley Preschool Philosophy

The program of Valley Preschool is committed to fostering intellectual, emotional, physical, academic, social and aesthetic growth in young children. A copy of Valley Preschool's Child Care Program Plan is available at the school and parents are welcome to review this at any time during normal business hours, 8:45am – 4:30pm daily, M-F. **Actual class times are held from 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. daily, M-F.**

It is influenced by the educational theories and methods of Maria Montessori and John Dewey, the discoveries of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, and the current trends in American education such as learning preference and cooperative learning.

The curriculum aligns with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress from Minnesota's Early Learning Standards and draws from a variety of resources which are activity based and developmentally appropriate. Meaningful activities are planned to help children develop communication skills, an understanding of themselves and others and an appreciation of the world around them. Activities are open-ended to encourage children to be curious and to make discoveries and meaningful connections.

The physical environment of Valley Preschool is child-centered. Each room is carefully structured in response to the child's sense of order and need for movement in the process of learning. Play materials are carefully selected, tastefully displayed, and always within the child's reach.

Materials are purchased or created to isolate specific learning goals, appeal to the child's interests, and provide the potential for successful completion without hindering creative exploration. Elements of the environment are changed throughout the year to stimulate interest, provide multi-sensory experiences and promote sequential hands-on learning.

Children are unique and individual in the ways they learn. The classroom provides learning opportunities to accommodate the interests and abilities of each child. Teaching methods take into account different learning styles and rates of learning.

Our teachers take care to provide an environment where children feel valued and accepted. By modeling and consciously practicing developmentally-appropriate communication skills, teachers help support children's abilities to effectively communicate – both with the goal of finding their own voice, as well as hearing those of others.

The development of social skills with peers as well as adults is an important component of Valley Preschool's program. Children are given the freedom to explore a variety of social interactions appropriate for their age level and are encouraged to participate in cooperative learning experiences.

Valley Preschool teachers set clear, consistent, fair limits for children's behavior. They are always available for support, assistance, and gentle guidance. Adults in the classroom serve as role models for mutual caring, self-esteem, and respect, as well as nonsexist and nonracial attitudes, and do not attempt to teach or endorse religious or political ideologies or abstract moral concepts. Teachers organize the classroom to make desirable behaviors possible and to reflect the children's needs, interests and ideas.

## History

Valley Preschool is a non-profit school licensed by the State of Minnesota, Department of Human Services. The school was formed in 1970 as Valley Montessori by a group of parents who wanted to provide a superior educational experience for their children.

The school occupied rented space in various locations in Stillwater, Bayport, and Oak Park Heights before it purchased the current site, in 1981. At that time, the school's name was changed to reflect a less defined and more creative approach to early childhood education.

Valley Preschool's curriculum follows the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress from Minnesota's Early Learning Standards.

### Hours of Operation / Class Offerings

<b>Honey Bees</b>	Mon & Tues AM	8:45 – 11:30 am	33 months – 4 years
<b>Butterflies</b>	Mon & Tues PM	12:45 – 3:30 pm	33 months – 4 years
<b>Little Explorers</b>	Mon & Tues AM & PM	8:45 am – 3:30 pm	33 months – 4 years
<b>Fireflies</b>	Wed, Thurs, Fri AM	8:45 – 11:30 am	4 – 5 years
<b>Young Da Vincis</b>	Wed, Thurs, Fri PM	12:45 – 3:30 pm	3.5 – 5 years
<b>Explorers</b>	Wed, Thurs, Fri AM & PM	8:45 am – 3:30 pm	3.5 – 5 years
<b>Adventurers</b>	Monday - Friday PM	12:45 – 3:30 pm	3 – 5 years
<b>Lunch Bunch</b>	Available Monday - Friday	11:45am-12:45 pm	33 months - 5 years
<b>Extended Day</b> (if offered)	Available Monday - Friday	3:30 – 4:30 pm	33 months - 5 years

### Extended Day Care

For many families with both parents working outside of the home or with older children riding the school bus home, making it to Valley Preschool by 3:30 pm can be a challenge. For many, an extra 45 min/an hour would make a huge difference. This is why we are again offering a program called Extended Day. Extended Day will be offered if there is enough family interest (a minimum of 7 students per day) and will not follow a curriculum or schedule, but rather will allow the children to continue their day exploring and playing with their friends (either inside or out) until their parents/caregivers are able to pick them up (no later than 4:30 pm).

Families can choose from one to five days a week. The cost per month is added to the monthly tuition cost and is fixed, based on the number of week days you select.

Refunds are not given for days unused and/or for picking up your child early.

## Registration

Morning and afternoon classes are offered for children of mixed ages from 33 months to 5 years. Class size is limited to 20 children (18 for our younger-aged classes), with a child-adult ratio of 10:1. *While a 10:1 ratio is standard practice for area schools and licensing requirements, at Valley Preschool we are proud to offer a teacher ratio of 6:1.*

Enrollment is open to any child, provided the school can meet the needs of the child. Valley Preschool does not discriminate in its admission, retention or educational policies on the basis of race, color, creed or ethnic origin, religion or disability and is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities and employment.

Notwithstanding Valley Preschool's commitment to equal access, the teachers, along with the school's Director & Board of Directors, reserves the right to not accept a child for enrollment if it determines, after consulting with the child's guardian(s), that the child poses a threat or danger to other students, or would significantly distract from the other students' learning experience.

## Entrance Requirements

All children must be potty-trained and pre-registered before attending Valley Preschool. Registration is complete after the following have been received:

- Registration for enrollment form
- Registration fee and last month's tuition
- Immunization record, *must be on file at the time of enrollment*
- Physician's Statement/Healthcare Summary, *must be on file within 30 days of enrollment*
- Preschool or School-Age Developmental History

An immunization record and a completed health form, signed by the child's health care provider, must be on file prior to a child's first day of attendance and updated each year, if there are changes.

A **Student Emergency Information Form** and **Authorized Caregiver Form** must be completed on or before a child's first day of school. Parents and guardians are responsible for notifying teachers of allergies, food sensitivities, speech or hearing delays or physical or emotional difficulties and for keeping the information on file up to date. Data in children's personal records and assessments in children's portfolios are confidential and will not be disclosed to any person or agency without written parental consent.

## Tuition

ACH is used for all monthly tuition payments. No Exceptions. Tuition for the school year is divided into equal payments. The first payment, along with the registration fee, for both new and returning students is due when you register your child. The first tuition payment will be applied to the last month of the school year (May). This payment is refundable only if requested in writing prior to June 1st. The registration fee is non-refundable. The second payment is due September 1st and subsequent payments are due on the first day of each month. Tuition will be electronically drawn from your bank account on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, or the next business day.

Valley Preschool requires tuition be paid via ACH. All families are required to have their current banking account information on file at the time of registration. Any changes made to the personal banking accounts should be reported to Valley Preschool's Director.

Refunds will not be given for children absent due to illness or vacations. However, with prior notification and approval from the Director, a place may be held at one-half tuition if a child is to be absent for one entire month.

Valley Preschool is dependent on tuition for its operating funds and tuition payments need to be made on time. All tuition must be current as of May 1<sup>st</sup>. Families will receive a written reminder if tuition becomes 10 days past due. After 20 days of non payment, an agreed payment plan will be set in place. Failure to follow the agreed payment plan after 30 days will result in un-enrollment of the student.

**One month (minimum 30 days)'s written notice must be given if a child will be withdrawn from school regardless of the reason, before completing the school term.** This gives the school a chance to fill the space without losing income.

The school requests that parents schedule a parent-teacher conference prior to withdrawal. As the school year progresses, it becomes more difficult to fill vacancies. For this reason, we urge parents to view enrollment as a nine month commitment.

## Arrival and Departure

**Arrivals:** A teacher will meet your car when you arrive in front of the school. Keep your child in the car until a teacher comes. **Teachers will begin meeting cars no earlier than 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time** (AM class start time is 9a, therefore teachers/staff will begin escorting students in at 8:45a; PM classes start at 1p, therefore teachers/staff will begin bringing children to and from their cars at 12:45p). Please respect your teacher's prep time and do not bring your child into the building prior unless advanced arrangements have been made or your child needs to use the bathroom. ***Parents arriving after 9am (morning class) or 1p (afternoon class) are asked to walk their child to the side door.*** This avoids class disruption. Thank you.

**Pick Up:** Please be in line at your child's class end time. When you come to pick up your child after class, a teacher will escort him/her to your car. Please remain in your car. If you are arriving 10 minutes past the class end time (classes end at 11:30a and 3:30p) you may receive a reminder notice. After the third notice a \$5 per late pick-up will be applied to the following month's tuition. Families will be notified of any totals at the end of each month. To avoid incurring late charges, please make every effort to be respectful of teachers' time by being to school on time.

There is enough space for two cars in front of the school - the **first car should always drive all the way up to the telephone pole in front of the school.** If you wish to come into the school or play yard, please park to the north of the school, on Oak Street.

**\*\*Please do not park in front of the white house on the corner of Greeley and Oak for periods greater than 10 minutes.\*\*** The neighbor who lives there has expressed a desire to leave this space open for potential visitors. Please inform friends or relatives who are picking up of our procedures. Thank you.

The school's Special Use Permit from the City Council is conditional upon your thoughtful driving when you drop off or pick up children at the school.

The following driving rules must be followed by everyone at all times:

1. Do not stop in front of a driveway - even for a minute! Wait until there is room for your entire car in front of the driveway before moving ahead.
2. Please refrain from walking on neighbors' yards or grassy areas of any kind.
3. Never make U-turns on Greeley Street, or turn around in the driveways of any of the school's neighbors.
4. Deliver and pick up your child from the northbound lane only. Never park on the other side and walk across.
5. Students must be loaded and unloaded from the sidewalk side of the car at all times.

**If you are late in arriving, please escort your child to the side door. If you are late in picking up, come into the building via the side door to pick up your child.**

### **Promptness**

Being punctual at both the beginning and the end of the session is important. Coming too early interferes with preparation time for the teachers, and late arrival is disruptive to the group. If a delay in picking up your child at the end of class time is expected and unavoidable, please notify your child's teacher.

## Authorization for Pick Up

Children will be released only to parents and authorized persons. Valley Preschool requests written or verbal notification by a parent if their child is to be picked up by someone other than the authorized person(s) listed on the consent form. Telephone authorization will be accepted only in concert with written prior authorization. Identification may be requested of persons unknown to staff members.

No child will be released to anyone who cannot safely care for the child. In the event an unauthorized or incapacitated person, or a person suspected of abuse attempts to pick up a child, Stillwater police will be called to assist.

## Car Tags

All vehicles used to drop off or pick up Valley Preschool students MUST use and clearly display the child's car tags in the front passenger window. This helps staff members easily identify who is in which vehicle. If a car tag becomes lost or misplaced, please let your child's teacher know and s/he will make a new one. Please allow one full day to receive your new tag(s). If a car tag should be in need of replacing, simply put a piece of computer paper in the front window in the car tag's place so staff are able to easily identify the student's vehicle.

## Illness

In an effort to keep all children, staff and visitors healthy, Valley Preschool prohibits parents/caregivers from sending their child to school if he/she has **any** of the following symptoms:

- vomiting, *do not send if illness has occurred at any point in the last 24 hours prior to class*
- diarrhea
- red, watering eyes (conjunctivitis or pink eye)
- sore throat, difficulty swallowing, strep, or impetigo (*until completing 24 hours of anti-microbial therapy*)
- fungal disorders, lesions or rash
- fever of 100 degrees or more, *before fever reducing medication is given – **\*\*child MUST be fever free (without the use of any medications and/or fever-reducing aids) for a FULL 24 HOURS before they are allowed back into school\*\****
- open wounds, cuts, breaks in the skin or open sores that cannot be covered
- head lice (until 24 hours after treatment begins and no nits are present)
- ring worm or scabies (until 24 hours after treatment begins)
- persistent, nagging, and/or uncontrolled coughing
- significant respiratory distress
- chicken pox, until no longer infectious

**If you do not want your child to play outside on a given day, we request that you keep him/her home, as outdoor activities are a regular part of the school program.**

Notify the school if your child has head lice or a communicable disease or will be absent for any reason (illness, vacation, etc.). Teachers will notify you via email within 24 hours if your child has been exposed to head lice or a communicable disease.

If a child becomes ill at school and neither parent can be reached by phone, the person(s) listed on the Emergency Information Form will be called and asked to come and pick up the child. A sick child will be provided a place to lie down and will be isolated from the group, with adult supervision until departure.

### **Emergencies and Accidents**

In the event of a medical emergency, 911 will be called for assistance in treating the emergency and possible transportation to Lakeview Hospital. Parents will be notified immediately. If the emergency is less serious, a staff person will administer first aid and contact the parent or designated person listed on the emergency form. Any expenses incurred during an emergency will be the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) responsibility.

### **Medication Policies**

Staff members will administer medication to children only in case of a chronic condition or a special health need. An exception to this would be medication provided by a parent to be used in case of an allergic reaction or other emergency. Whenever possible, a child's medication schedule should be set up so that a child does not need to take medication while at school.

Staff members will follow Valley Preschool's Health Policies and will only administer medication in compliance with the following regulations:

- Prescription or nonprescription medications will be administered to child only with the written order of a physician that indicates the medication is for that specific child.
- No medication, whether prescription or nonprescription, will be administered to a child without written parental authorization.
- Prescription and nonprescription medicine must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name and directions for safe use.
- Outdoor play is part of Valley's daily curriculum. Please apply sunscreen before school if other methods of sun protection are not utilized, such as sun hats or long sleeve clothing. Written parental permission is required for administration of skin care products including ointment, sun screen and insect repellent.

## **Administering Topical Ointment/Lotion/Powder**

Authorization must be provided for staff to apply over-the-counter, topical ointments or gel, insect repellents, lotions, and/or creams, such as sunscreen. *Permission to Administer Topical Ointment/Lotion/Powder* Forms are available upon request. See either your child's teacher(s) or school director for more information on this policy and/or to request a form.

Item provided must be in its original container and clearly labeled with the child's full name. Staff will keep items out of reach of children when not in use. Items will remain at Valley Preschool, unless requested by parent/caregiver.

Sunscreen should be applied prior to drop off.

## **Safety, First Aid and Prevention**

Valley Preschool teachers and staff model healthy behavior and provide a safe and healthy environment at all times. All staff members are trained in First Aid, CPR, Blood Borne Pathogens, and follow standard precautions as recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in handling blood or body fluids. Staff members follow *Valley Preschool's Risk Reduction Plan* to minimize risk of injury to students in coordination with the MN Department of Human Services.

Children are taught safe practices: washing their own wounds, controlling their own bleeding, not to touch anyone else's blood, and to tell an adult when someone is bleeding.

## **Clothing**

Dress your child in simple, comfortable, easily washed **play clothes**. Tempera paint, although water-based, does not always wash out. Choose clothing that is free of complicated fastenings, so your child can dress and undress with the greatest amount of independence. Choose shoes that are safe for running and active play, **not** flip flops, clogs, or shoes with high heels or platforms.

Teachers and staff ask that you **clearly label** your child's clothing (coats, sweaters, boots, hats, etc.). Teachers cannot keep track of unmarked articles of clothing. Students will spend some time outside virtually every day. They should be dressed appropriately for the weather. During the cold months this includes snow pants or snowsuits, hats or hoods, mittens, and boots for outdoor play. Please keep a Ziploc baggie of season-appropriate extra clothing in your child's backpack **at all times** in case a change of clothes is needed at any point throughout the day.

## **Snacks**

We believe nutrition plays a very important role in the overall health of our children. Therefore, nutritious snacks are served daily as part of the program at Valley Preschool.

In lieu of requesting parents be responsible for the purchasing, preparing and sending carefully-selected and high-quality snacks (enough to feed an entire class multiple times per week) a several times a school year, Valley will handle the menu-planning, purchasing and preparing of the snacks to coincide with the weekly/monthly/seasonal themes whenever possible. To help cover the snack cost, a one-time \$50 snack fee will be automatically withdrawn from the bank account on file with the school. If families prefer, this fee can be divided into two semester payments of \$30 *each*. Notification of this request must be sent in writing to the school's director prior to 9/6/18 to ensure correct billing.

Families can opt out by completing the Snack Policy Opt-Out Form & returning it to the school or emailing to the school's director not later than 6/1/20. To request a Snack Policy Opt-Out Form, please email the director no later than 5/30/20.

Food that could be a choking hazard will not be served for snack.

Child care facilities licensed under Rule 3, Minnesota Department of Human Services, are required to serve snacks that meet USDA Guidelines.

To ensure we are meeting the Department of Health's guidelines, Valley's snack policy requires that daily offerings include items from 2 different food groups. Water is served as the primary beverage.

Children are encouraged to have a clearly-labeled water bottle to use at snack/lunch time, and throughout the day. For more information on the snack policy, see attached policy at the end of this handbook. A copy is also available at the school.

### **Birthday Treats at School**

Valley Preschool is a peanut restricted school, and we often have students with various allergies. Due to this we ask that you not send food items such as candy or cupcakes for birthdays. If families would like to send a healthy food option (whole fruit popsicles, fresh fruit, etc.) please let teachers know at least one week ahead of time so accommodations can be made to include the special birthday boy/girl's offering. Non-food treats are also acceptable, though not required. Any non-food treats will be distributed by teachers to children to take home at the end of class.

### **Out-of-School Birthday Parties**

Party invitations to preschool friends should be mailed rather than handed out at school. A child's feelings may be hurt if he/she does not get an invitation, or if gifts are brought to school and he/she is not included. If inviting EVERY student in the class, teachers are happy to distribute invitations through student folders.

## Water Bottles

Children are encouraged to bring their own, clearly labeled, water bottles to school each day. Valley requests that the water bottles be:

- Easy for the child to open and close
- Non-glass
- Leak-proof

## Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is optional for half-day students and included for full-day students. It is offered Monday through Friday from 11:45am-12:45pm. The supervised lunch hour is \$24 per day/month. For example, a family with a child staying for lunch Mondays only would be charged an additional \$24 per month, added to tuition. A child eating Mondays and Tuesdays would be charged \$48 per month, etc. For full-day students, the cost of lunch bunch is already included in tuition.

Families provide a bag lunch, along with a water bottle, each day. Water served in cups will be available for those who do not have their water bottle that day. Please do not send juice boxes or other beverages. Lunch boxes are stored on top of student lockers. If sending a perishable item, please include an ice pack.

**To meet MN Licensing requirements, bag lunches MUST include:**

- **one serving of grains**
- **one serving of protein**
- **two servings of fruits or vegetables**

The lunch fee is due with tuition on the first of each month and automatically paid via ACH. Each month will vary, depending on how many days of class take place in that month and what days are requested. Lunch tuition is non-refundable.

Please designate preference of days on the *Lunch Request Form* and return it by August 20<sup>th</sup>, or the month before you would like lunch to begin. For billing purposes, lunch will be calculated on a month-to-month basis and although lunch request forms/changes can be turned in at any time, we prefer additions/changes take place at the beginning of each month. Please allow time for processing. We can accommodate a maximum of 20 students per day. If more than 20 students register per day, priority is given to full day students. Remaining students requesting lunch will be entered into a lottery, to be conducted on August 20<sup>th</sup>, for any days of the week that exceed 20 requests. Students who did not receive their first choice of days will be guaranteed their second choice. Lunch requests arriving after August 20<sup>th</sup> will be allowed to register only if space is available, and remaining spots will be given on a first come basis.

## **Rest Time**

Full day students are required by licensing to have a rest period if they are at school for more than 5 hours. Our rest period takes place directly after lunchtime for 30 minutes in the block room. Each student has their own cot to rest on for the school year. Bedding on the cot will be sent home each day in the child's backpack. It should be washed at home on a weekly basis and when soiled. Families are responsible for providing a blanket starting on the first day of school. Blankets should be in good condition and be able to fit in a one-gallon Ziploc baggie, for ease of transporting.

## **Toys**

To eliminate the risk of loss and potential distractions, please do not allow your child to bring toys to school. If necessary for a child's comfortable adjustment to the school environment, however, a child will be allowed to bring a favorite toy or security object until it is no longer needed.

## **Pets**

Occasionally, pets are included in the school curriculum. If your child has an allergy to any animals please notify the school's director, as well as your child's teacher. Visiting pets must be in good health, show no evidence of carrying any disease; be kept clean and housed in clean quarters; be immunized for any disease which might be transmitted to humans and maintained on a flea, tick and worm control program.

Please let your child's teacher know at least one week in advance if you would like to bring a pet to visit. If it works with scheduling and teachers allow it, all class families will be notified if pets or other animals will be visiting the school.

Ferrets; turtles or other reptiles that can carry salmonella; birds of the parrot family; or wild animals will not be permitted to visit school unless special permission is given by both the school's director and your child's teacher.

## **Field Trips**

Valley Preschool partners with many wonderful community organizations in order to provide unique learning opportunities in the form of special field trips throughout the year. Field trips are optional for families but classes may not be held on the field trip day. More details will be provided on the field trip information slips.

Parental permission must be obtained in writing before children participate in field trips or in any off-site school sponsored activity. Parents are not only encouraged but welcome to attend the field trips. However, if they are unable to do so themselves, they will need to arrange a chaperone and transportation for their own child(ren) to and from the field trip.

## School Closing Due to Weather

A school calendar listing prearranged school closings for the current school year will be given to parents on the first day of school. For school closings due to weather, listen to WCCO radio (830am on your dial), or WCCO TV (Channel 4), or check the WCCO web site, [wcco.com](http://wcco.com) or [wccoradio.com](http://wccoradio.com).

Valley Preschool follows the Stillwater Area School District's closings, delays and early-release situations. **Valley Preschool's morning and afternoon classes will be cancelled if bad weather causes the Stillwater area schools (District 834) to cancel their classes. If the district has a two-hour delay, morning classes and lunch will be canceled, but afternoon classes will run as scheduled.** If inclement weather forces Valley to close early, parents/authorized caregivers will be notified immediately so pick-up arrangements can be made. A separate announcement for Valley Preschool will not be made via media outlets. Parents will be notified by phone if Valley Preschool is canceled for an emergency other than weather.

Classes that meet two times per week will be given two weather-related closings per school year, and classes that meet three times per week will be given three weather-related closings per school year. If the school is closed more than the allotted times per school year, an attempt will be made to schedule make-up class times.

## PARENT-STAFF COMMUNICATION

### All-School Announcements

Information pertinent to all Valley Preschool families will be communicated electronically via email or through paper hand-outs from the school's director.

### Class-Specific Information/Announcements

Here at Valley Preschool, we use an app called **Class Dojo**. Sign-up directions are given at the start of the school year and information relating to specific class happenings, events, etc. will come directly from the teacher(s) via this app or through paper handouts sent home with students in their take-home folders. Any questions relating to a day's theme, upcoming class events, etc. should be directed to the class teacher(s).

### Calling the School

VPS staff members welcome calls before or after class for any questions and concerns you may have. Please use the **Main number** (651-439-8850). If no one is available, leave a message (or contact us via [Class Dojo](#)) and your question will be answered as quickly as possible. If you have an *urgent*\* message during class time, please use the

**VPS Urgent Phone number** (651-439-3585). This unlisted number has a special ring to identify urgent calls and will be given out only to parents of enrolled children. *\*Forgetting a water bottle; a lost Paw Patrol sticker; etc. are NOT urgent matters.* Thank you.

## **Email Communication**

Each staff member has a Valley Preschool email address, which can be found online at [www.valleypreschool.org](http://www.valleypreschool.org) under the staff page. Please feel free to correspond with your child's teacher in this manner as well for non-urgent issues.

## **General**

We ask that all communication, regardless of delivery (verbal or written) be respectful. In the unlikely event parents / caregivers verbally abuse; yell at; do not speak to and/or otherwise treat any Valley Preschool staff member(s) with respect, they do risk the termination of enrollment.

## **Social Media**

Valley Preschool expressly prohibits the use of social media for the purpose(s) of using language that is either slanderous or negative in tone (expressly stated, implied or otherwise) towards Valley Preschool, its staff and/or overall programming. Any concerns should be brought to or shared with VPS staff member(s) directly vs. creating postings that can be potentially misleading and/or damaging to the credibility of Valley Preschool.

## **Reporting Absences**

If a child will be absent from school on any day for any reason (illness, vacation, etc.), parents are requested to notify the school in advance of the absence. The staff also appreciates knowing if a child will be arriving late or will be leaving early. Thank you.

## **Open Door Policy and Observations**

Parents are always welcome to visit in their child's class. A classroom observation by a parent provide a sample look into the rhythm of the child's day, their child's interaction with his/her peers and with staff and what kinds of activities are made available to the child. A 24-hour advance arrangement is appreciated for parents. Additionally, if parents are looking for ways to connect with their child during class time, Valley Preschool encourages parents to contact their child's teacher(s) to inquire about ways to become involved in and around the school.

For security reasons, visits from extended family or persons whom Valley Preschool does not have frequent communication (grandparent, uncle/aunt, friend, etc.) **REQUIRE** a 24 hour advance notice from the parent of the child.

Please remember that Valley Preschool is a smoke free facility.

## **Conferences**

Parent-Teacher conferences are offered to currently-enrolled VPS families. Conferences are held bi-annually; once in the fall (October/November) and again in the spring (late April/May). Parents are highly encouraged to attend the fall conferences. At the fall conference, teachers will share with you developmental checklists, observation notes and some samples of your child(ren)'s work. At this time, parents are encouraged to bring observations about the child's development at home as well as any questions or other relevant information they would like to discuss.

The goal of this conference is to connect with parents to ensure the family's goals for their child is understood, as well as to potentially identify possible areas needing more focus in order to ensure the child experiences success and growth throughout the year. This is a great time for parents to share their insights and any concerns with the staff. A strong partnership between parents and teachers is vital.

Parents should notify the director prior to the conferences if they wish for him/her to be present as well. The director will be available to answer any questions they may have.

Spring conferences are offered to all parents but are optional. Student portfolios will be sent home in the spring for parents to review and a conference can be scheduled if the parent and/or the teacher feel the need to discuss the student's progress. Student portfolios and assessments are confidential.

Valley Preschool exists to assist parents in providing meaningful learning experiences for their children. We strive to provide communication to all families in a manner that is sensitive to family values, culture, identity and home language. Face to face conferences provide a wonderful opportunity to talk both about what your child has learned in our program as well as what they have to look forward to!

## **Child Observation and Assessment**

At Valley Preschool, we use a variety of assessment tools including formal and informal observations and developmental checklists in order to continuously monitor and support your child's development. Constant interaction with the children allows teachers to appropriately assess their skills and developmental levels as well as their interests and needs. Our curriculum and activities are modified based on these assessment results to meet the needs of individual children. Our assessment results also indicate areas where Valley Preschool will plan program improvement.

Developmental checklists help teachers observe, record, and evaluate children's skills and knowledge. The checklists reflect common behaviors and expectations in our classroom. These checklists are closely linked to the developmentally appropriate activities that our program offers.

Each of these assessment tools will be administered in your child's classroom with their primary teacher(s). It is important that children are able to participate in assessments within environments that are familiar to them.

If the results of these assessments indicate a potential need for a second opinion/ outside support, Valley Preschool will work along with the family to arrange for a developmental screening or referral for diagnostic assessment for the child. Results of all assessments will be kept confidential and will remain stored in the center's office.

## **Parent Participation**

An important aspect of early childhood learning is contact and interaction with adults as well as peers. Parent participation may be as simple as showing a collection or helping children plant seeds. It may be assisting with a cooking project, sharing a musical talent, telling a story, or reading a favorite book. Contact your child's teacher if you would like to help.

## **Valley Preschool Parent Group**

Parents provide necessary energy, resources and support for the outstanding programming at Valley Preschool. As a way for parents to be involved and collaborate to create fun school opportunities for the students and their families at Valley Preschool, the VPS Parent Group was formed. This group helps connect interested families in a fun and social atmosphere and the primary goal is simple: support the school community through planning and implementing all-school social events and special days. The Parent Group works directly with the director.

Any interested parents wishing to become a classroom organizer or lead volunteer, please contact Sarah for more details.

## **Photo Release Opt-Out**

Pictures are taken of staff and students throughout the year and are used for the purposes of sharing via school / class updates, newsletters, social media posts (we do not list or tag individuals), and for the creation of the annual yearbook. Families who do not wish to have their child(ren)'s pictures taken may request a *Photo Release Opt-Out Form*. See your child's teacher and/or school director for the form.

## **Public Relations Activities**

Parental permission and notification are required before any child can be involved in a public relations photograph or activity, outside of the normal social media posts, website updates, etc. Any students with a signed *Photo Release Opt-Out form* on file (see the "Photo Release Opt-Out" section, above, for more details) will not be allowed to participate without prior written parental consent.

## **Research Involving Minors**

Parental permission and notification are required before any child can be involved in a professional educational study. Students will not be allowed to participate without prior written parental consent. *While this is an unlikely activity, we are required to inform parents that no child will be subject to “educational research” of any kind without their prior written consent.*

## **Experimental Procedures**

Parental permission and notification are required before any child will be involved in an experimental educational procedure. *While this is an unlikely scenario, Valley Preschool is required to inform parents that no child will be subject to any “experimental procedure” without their prior written consent.*

## **Confidential Data Information**

In compliance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, data recorded in a child's personal records will not be disclosed to any person or agency other than the child, the child's parents or guardians, the child's legal representatives, employees of the school or the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services unless prior written consent has been obtained from the parents or guardians.

## **Grievance Procedure**

Open and direct communication between Valley Preschool staff and parents is encouraged. In the event a parent has a grievance (complaint), the following procedures should be followed so that the issue can be given timely, fair, and continued consideration until resolved:

1. Parents must discuss the situation with the staff member(s) directly involved.
2. If an understanding is not reached, the school's director shall be notified of the grievance in question by the parents in a written communication within 10 days of the incident.

Within 10 days after the submission of the written grievance, a meeting to consider the grievance will be held with the director, the staff person involved and the parent.

Any agreement reached shall be submitted in writing to the school's director for approval.

3. If an agreement cannot be reached, the grievance will be taken by the director to BoD for further consideration and resolution.

## **Behavior Guidance Policy**

Behavior guidance is a process by which children learn to control and direct their own behavior and includes the objectives of enhancing self-esteem and encouraging respect for self and others. Teachers help children build behaviors through their interactions with children. They provide a positive model of acceptable behavior and guide children with firm, consistent and developmentally appropriate expectations.

Teachers redirect children and groups away from problems and toward constructive activities to reduce negative behavior. Natural consequences are used when appropriate.

Discipline is handled individually depending on the situation and the developmental level of the child. Care is taken to not embarrass a child in front of peers or adults and a child's rights and feelings are always considered.

There are certain behaviors that are unacceptable within the program guidelines; biting, pinching, hitting, kicking, choking, bullying, or actions that pose harm to the child, another child, or an adult. If, for any reason, children feel threatened by or afraid of a classmate's behavior, the behaviors will be observed and recorded with staff responses.

If a child's behavior is persistently unacceptable, a separation from the group may be necessary. This will occur in an unenclosed part of the classroom, within sight and earshot of a staff member. The child will be given a chance to rejoin the group when he/she has regained control.

No child will be separated from the group unless less intrusive methods of guiding the child's behavior have been ineffective. All separations will be noted on a daily log. If a child is separated three or more times in one day, the child's parents will be notified.

In the event of persistent unacceptable behavior, which requires increased amounts of guidance and time, teachers will 1) observe and record the behavior of the child and the staff response to the behavior for a minimum of two weeks. 2) develop a plan to address the documented behavior in consultation with the child's parents and when appropriate, with other professionals, and 3) if all avenues have been exhausted and unacceptable behavior continues, Valley Preschool reserves the right to terminate enrollment if a child poses a threat or danger to other students or is significantly distracting from the other students' learning experience.

Valley Preschool's behavior guidance policy prohibits staff members from using corporal punishment or using physical restraint other than to physically hold a child when containment is necessary to protect the child or others from harm. At no time may a child be subjected to emotional abuse or humiliation, punished for toilet accidents, or punished by withholding food, light, warmth or clothing.

## **Licensing Contact Information**

To report unsafe conditions at a licensed childcare center, contact the department's licensing division at 651-431-6500.

## **Family Support Services**

For a list of Family Support Services available to families living in Washington county, please visit:

<https://www.co.washington.mn.us/469/Community-Services>

## **Mandatory Reporting Policy**

For more information on reporting policies, please see a copy of the *Maltreatment of Minors Mandated Reporting Policy for DHS Licensed Programs* located at Valley Preschool and available to all families during normal business hours daily, M-F, 8:45 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

## **Insurance**

Valley Preschool carries coverage for general liability and non-owner auto coverage (for field trips only) as required by state law. Valley Preschool staff and board members are also insured under a Directors and Officers policy.

## **Annual Review of Policies and Procedures**

The school's health policies and practices are reviewed annually to certify that they are adequate to protect children and staff. The most up-to-date policies and procedures are placed in the school files. Parents may request to see the school's entire health and safety policies and the findings of the director and/or the health care consultant, if applicable, at any time.

## APPENDIX

### VPS Snack Policy

Valley Preschool's snack policy has one very simple goal: creating healthy and vibrant children through healthy snacking. Healthy snacking provides energy for each student to thrive, learn and play.

To keep things fun, Valley Preschool will create a monthly menu, keeping seasonal produce in mind. The menu will emphasize the following snack standards:

- ✓ Increase the consumption of fruits, vegetables and 100% whole grains
- ✓ Eliminate unhealthy ingredients such as sugary additives, food dyes, processed grains, etc.
- ✓ Enforce a peanut free school
- ✓ Reduce sugars by being juice free (unless made fresh on special occasions)
- ✓ Provide snack variety

For ease and convenience, the Valley Preschool staff will be in charge of purchasing all snacks. All that we ask of our parents is to pay a one-time snack fee. The cost of providing variety of fun and nutritious food items is only \$50 for the entire school year.

In addition, families are asked to send a clearly-labeled water bottle to school with their child daily. Please send **only water**; juice is not allowed.

*Note:* having your child pick out a water bottle can be a fun way to encourage healthy hydration throughout the day!

Thank you, in advance, for helping us make  
***providing a fun and healthy*** snack time possible!



*An environment of discovery  
for young children*



An environment of discovery  
for young children

# 2020-2021 PARENTAL AGREEMENT

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please read the following statements. Check all that apply. *A signed Parental Agreement for the current school year must be collected and remain on file as part of the child's school record.*

See the school's director, Sarah Peterson, with any questions.

- I acknowledge I have been given a copy of the Valley Preschool **2020-2021 Parent Handbook**.
- I understand it is my responsibility to read through it carefully.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent / Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

*For Office Use Only:*  
Verified By (License Holder's Initials): \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_