



**Sparta Early Childhood Center
Family Handbook**

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Childcare Program Open Year Round* 6:30am-9:00am/3:30pm-6:00pm Mon-Thurs. Friday and district closed days 6:30am-6:00pm *Closed on major holidays</p> | <p>3 Year Old Preschool Half Day 9:00am-12:00pm Tuesday-Thursday Full Day 9:00am-3:30pm; Monday-Thursday</p> <p>Head Start 7:45-2:45 Monday-Thursday</p> |
| <p>Early Childhood Special Education 8:30am-11:45am or 12:35 pm-3:50 pm Monday-Thursday</p> | <p>Great Start Readiness Program 4 year old preschool 9:10am-3:55 pm Monday-Thursday</p> |

Upon enrollment, families will be given a calendar that pertains to the program they are enrolled in.

Sparta ECC follows all rules, regulations and policies developed by LARA and the state of Michigan as any special investigation reports, corrective action plans from the past 3 years. All of the above can be found at www.michigan.gov/michildcare

A licensing notebook is available in the center office and includes the following and is available during regular business hours:
-licensing inspections, special investigations, and corrective action plans for the past 5 years.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| District Mission Statement..... | 3 |
| District Vision Statement..... | 3 |
| Philosophy..... | 3 |
| Family Involvement..... | 3 |
| Cultural Competency Plan..... | 3 |
| Supporting Children with Special Needs and Disabilities..... | 3 |
| Community Resources..... | 3 |
| Conferences & Newsletters..... | 4 |
| Food Service and Nutrition..... | 4 |
| Social and Emotional Health..... | 4 |
| Discipline..... | 4 |
| Suspension and Expulsion Policy..... | 6 |
| Transitions Between Programs..... | 6 |
| Curriculum..... | 6 |
| Assessment..... | 6 |
| Communication..... | 7 |
| Tuition Contract and Payments..... | 7 |
| Change of Schedule and Withdraw Procedure..... | 7 |
| Vacation Policy..... | 7 |
| Program Eligibility and Enrollment..... | 8 |
| Toilet Training Policy..... | 8 |
| Items From Home..... | 8 |
| In-Home Childcare Disclaimer..... | 9 |
| Confidentiality..... | 9 |
| Field Trips..... | 9 |
| Accident and Emergency Policies..... | 9 |
| Absences..... | 9 |
| Late Pick Up Policy..... | 9 |
| School Closings..... | 10 |
| Weather Policy..... | 10 |
| Dress/Clothing..... | 10 |
| Rest Time..... | 10 |
| Vaccination Records..... | 10 |
| Medication Policy..... | 11 |
| Health and Communicable Disease..... | 11 |
| Cleaning and Sanitizing..... | 11 |
| Handwashing Policy and Procedure..... | 11 |
| Sample daily schedule for full day preschool..... | 12 |
| Sample daily schedule for half day preschool..... | 13 |

District Mission Statement

Cultivating a dynamic, compassionate community that empowers all learners to lead successful lives.

District Vision Statement

Creating valuable relationships and innovative learning experiences within our schools and community that empowers all learners to thrive and excel.

Philosophy

Creating relationships with families, teachers, and children by cultivating child-centered, purposeful, play-based environments that support critical thinking skills, develop positive self-concepts, and promote independence to ensure children will be socially, emotionally, and academically ready to thrive and excel.

Family Involvement

There are multiple scheduled opportunities for families to engage in activities within the classroom and center throughout the year. It is important to us to incorporate family cultures in the classroom through various ways such as family photo albums and all about me sheets.

Cultural Competency Plan

It is the commitment of the staff that all families feel welcome, respected, and supported in our programs through a lens of culture and diversity. We strive to create a safe space for all children to be represented in classroom materials, family dynamics, and experiences. Staff receive continuous training to support diversity, equity and inclusion. Staff teach children about the value of differences and acceptance by providing a safe place to ask questions and explore differences. We have staff that are able to speak in Spanish for children and families as needed.

Supporting Children with Special Needs and Disabilities

Sparta Early Childhood Center strives to meet the needs of all enrolled children. The center has a team that consists of a speech pathologist, school social worker, school psychiatrist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and school nurse. They determine what students need on an individual basis for special needs and disabilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to discuss it with classroom staff or the center director.

Community Resources

We have a social worker present in our building during school hours that assists families with community resources included but not limited to food banks and medical and dental resources.

Conferences & Newsletters

Conferences are scheduled once in the fall and once in the spring. During conferences you will receive written and verbal information about your child's development. You will receive a monthly newsletter from your child's teacher informing you of the happenings in the classroom and what you can do to support your child's development.

Food Service and Nutrition

Sparta Early Childhood Center works in cooperation with the district's food service to offer meals and snacks. All meals follow the minimum standards of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP ensures that participants receive balanced, healthy meals and helps children start good nutrition habits early in life. Meals include the 5 food groups: dairy, protein, grains, fruit, and vegetables. Full day students receive two meals and one snack. Half-day students receive a snack. Meal Times are available on each classroom's individual schedules. If you need your child to receive meal accommodations for food allergies or a medical condition impacting their diet, please ensure that you submit the required documentation. In order for food service to make any meal accommodations we need a completed Special Diet Statement Form which can be found on the Sparta Area Schools website under the Food Service web page in the resource section. <https://www.spartaschools.org/departments/menus/> Menus are posted at the main entrance and on our website.

Social and Emotional Health

Children's social and emotional health has a direct connection to growth and learning. Supporting their social and emotional skills leads to more interest in school, peer connections, and growth. To foster these skills, we teach students how to recognize emotions and learn to express them appropriately through large and small group activities and during conflicts. We promote growth of independence and a sense of competence through self help skills, problem solving abilities, and coping skills. This also helps to develop a positive self concept. We develop social skills such as speaking and listening skills through opportunities to play cooperatively and practice problem solving and negotiation skills.

Discipline

Discipline is not punishment and not just getting a child to "mind;" discipline involves helping a child gain control over his or her own behavior and emotions. Positive discipline methods will help guide a child toward self-discipline and independence.

Positive methods of discipline include:

- Redirecting or distracting a child from the unacceptable activity to a constructive one.
- Planning ahead to prevent problems.
- Encouraging, teaching and modeling appropriate behavior.

- Setting consistent, clear rules.
- Talking to the child about the feelings he/she is having.
- Offering alternative solutions to the problem.
- Involving children in solving problems.
- Ensuring a relationship between the behavior and the discipline method.
- Tailoring the method of discipline to the individual child.
- Removing the child from the source of conflict.

Time-out should only be used to stop aggressive behavior or to allow angry or upset children to calm down. It is an opportunity for children to clear their minds and rejoin the group or activity in a more productive state. Use time-outs only as a last resort to help the child gain a better sense of self-control. When using time-out, caregiving staff must assure:

- Their expectations of the child's behavior are realistic.
- Consequences immediately follow the child's behavior.
- Children are not humiliated or made to feel threatened or afraid.
- The time-out does not last longer than it takes for the child to calm down.
- Children remain supervised at all times.

All caregiving staff are responsible and accountable for:

- Assuring that a child's movement is not restricted by the use of a harness or leash or other restraint device.
- Assuring that the strapping device on confining equipment, such as high chairs are used to stabilize the child in that type of chair and not used for punishment or discipline.
- Assuring that firm and consistent expectations are given that do not cause children to feel shame or humiliation.

Children cannot be excluded from outdoor play or participation in large gross motor activities as a behavioral consequence. Examples of this include:

- Not allowing a child to go outside because of misbehavior during small group time.
- Excluding the child from the entire outdoor period for throwing sand.
- Excluding the child from gym activities for not eating their lunch.

Children cannot be excluded from daily learning experiences. This does not include age appropriate discipline techniques, such as:

- Redirecting a child from the block area after throwing blocks.
- Having a child participate in small group time in a way that benefits the child and doesn't disrupt the group, such as having the child sit a few feet away.
- Using time out when appropriate as outlined above

Note: The practices outlined in this subrule are prohibited regardless of parental permission. Any caregiver who questions or has concerns regarding a parental discipline request should contact their licensing consultant.

Suspension and Expulsion Policy

It is our ultimate goal to keep children in care everyday all throughout the school year. At times, extreme behaviors may necessitate a child being suspended or expelled from the program. If a child requires a one-on-one staff member for more than 30 minutes due to challenging behaviors, the director and staff reserve the right to call the family and have the child picked up and suspended for the day. A process of documenting the behavior, implementing strategies, and director involvement with the classroom will occur prior to expulsion. The director will have a meeting with the family to set up a plan to help reduce the extreme behaviors. If the plan is not effective, the director maintains the right to suspend or expel any child from the program. Your support and cooperation will help us provide a safe and quality setting for your child and all of the children.

Transitions Between Programs

We offer five different programs in our building. Though many children are only in one program per year, there are some that are in two or more programs. Staff will walk the children to and from programs during the day as needed. Staff help with the process of enrolling children into Ridgeview Elementary for Developmental Kindergarten or Kindergarten as needed. If students need before and/or after school care once they attend Ridgeview Elementary, we help facilitate that transition as well. Children who need summer child care will remain at the Sparta Early Childhood Center until their first day of school at Ridgeview Elementary unless the family and staff determine it's best for the child to move sooner.

Curriculum

Our program uses a blend of Creative Curriculum and High Scope Curriculum. We focus on supporting early learners as they make decisions, build academic skills, develop socially and emotionally, and become part of a classroom community. Staff organize intentional learning centers such as house area, toys and games, book nook, art and writing center as well as other learning centers. Children engage in both individual and social play, participate in small- and large-group activities, assist with cleanup, socialize during meals, develop self-care skills, and exercise their small and large muscles.

Assessment

Our program uses COR Advantage for student assessments. Staff take observations of children during all parts of the day. Assessments are completed 3 times per year; Period one is the start of the school year to fall conferences, period two is fall conferences to spring conferences, and period three is spring conferences until the end of the school year. At conferences and throughout the year, staff will share strengths with families and

collaborate with them to create goals for children to work on both at home and school. Staff and administrative team members use assessment data to add activities to lesson plans to foster growth in the areas needed each period or more often as needed.

Communication

Communication for childcare and 3 year old preschool can be via phone, in person, or email.

Tuition Contract and Payments

Every family will sign a contract that will indicate the schedule their child will attend the childcare program and/or 3 year old preschool program. Tuition will be charged based on your contracted schedule, not attendance. Tuition payment requests are sent out every Friday and due on Monday for the current week. Tuition charges still apply when children are absent from childcare for any reason other than when childcare is closed. Winter break and spring break are done on a sign up basis and are charged based on sign ups for those weeks. Credits are given to families on days that childcare is closed. If your child attends childcare on a no school or snow day the full day rate will be added to your bill. There is an annual registration fee of \$50 that will be collected when your yearly contract expires. We accept payments from the Child Development and Care Program that offer assistance with paying for childcare. Visit Mi Bridges to apply for childcare assistance. Mibridges.michigan.gov. Payments will be made using the SmartCare Parent App or Web Portal system. Cash and checks are not accepted. Late fees will be applied on Tuesdays at a rate of 10% of the tuition charge. You will be contacted by the director if your child will be withdrawn from the program until payment is made. After 3 months of non-payment, accounts will be turned over for collections.

Change of Schedule and Withdraw Procedure

If a family needs to add a day to their schedule that is not in their current contract, it must be done by contacting the school secretary or center director via phone, via Kaymbu or email 1 week in advance to the day that needs to be added. Adding days cannot be guaranteed due to ratios and licensing regulations. Changes of schedules or withdrawing from the program can be done at any time. Please refrain from asking childcare or preschool staff to add a day or withdrawal from programming. They will ask families to contact office staff.

Vacation Policy

Families are given one week credit worth of vacation time if they are enrolled in the child care program full time for a full year. Children enrolled in only tuition preschool, only school year care, or only the summer program will not have this availability. This can only be used on days the child is not in care.

Program Eligibility and Enrollment

Childcare is available to children who attend another program in our building and are fully toilet trained. 3 year old preschool is available to children who are 3 years old by December 1st and are fully toilet trained.

The following must be completed prior to a child attending the center

- Birth Certificate
- Proof of Residency
- Health Appraisal
- Child Information Card
- Licensing Notebook Notification/ Child Abuse and Neglect Statement
- Permission Form/ Toilet Trained Acknowledgement
- Tuition Contract
- Registration Fee \$50 per child/ \$100 per family

Toilet Training Policy

Children in all programming are required to be fully toilet trained. We understand that occasional accidents happen. In the case of an accident, children will be changed immediately. The soiled clothing will be put in a plastic bag to be taken home. Bathroom breaks are built into the daily schedule and a bathroom is always available for when a child needs to go. Staff will encourage your child to wipe themselves after a bowel movement. We ask that you practice this at home as well. You are welcome to keep wipes in your child's cubby labeled with their name for them to use at school as well. Excessive accidents, defined as more than two per week for three weeks, may result in being withdrawn from programming. If a child has had more than two accidents at school in the same week, a meeting with the child's teacher will be required to set up a plan to see how we can best support the child. If the child does not respond after one week then an adjustment to the plan will be made. If the child does not respond after the adjustment, then the child may be removed from the center until the child is more completely potty trained.

Items From Home

Center staff asks that toys from home stay at home unless otherwise approved by the classroom teacher for special occasions. The center will not be responsible for any broken or lost items.

In-Home Childcare Disclaimer

Families and their children become comfortable with staff and they sometimes ask our staff to provide after-hours, at-home childcare. Sparta Early Childhood Center assumes no responsibility for employees who provide private services to families.

Confidentiality

Staff does not reveal information regarding your child except as required by law.

Field Trips

Field trips out of the center happen during the summer program. Families will be given advance notice and will be asked to sign a permission slip with their summer enrollment packet. The form will include the date, time of departure from the center, time of arrival back to the center, the location of the field trip, and mode of transportation. Children may walk to a location if it is within reasonable distance to the center or may use public school transportation.

Accident and Emergency Policies

Minor accidents, incidents and/or injuries are common in young children as they are developing balance and movement skills. Depending on the incident, families may be notified in conversation or in writing via an e-mail report on the same day as the incident of a minor accident or injury (some examples include: surface cuts, scrapes, bruising of the skin, or bloody noses). If the injury is of a more serious nature (some examples include: significant blood loss, cuts, head trauma), parents will be contacted immediately by phone and in some cases, they will be requested to pick their child up from school. All serious injuries requiring medical attention are required to be reported to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). If necessary, in the event of an emergency, teachers will follow policy to call 911 and then contact parents. If a child needs to go to the hospital, a staff member will be present if a family member is not present.

Absences

Absences should be reported to the office via the attendance line at (616) 887-0068 and then press 1. Please leave a message with your child's name, teacher, and reason for absence.

Late Pick Up Policy

If a child has not been picked up by 6:00 p.m. the following steps will be taken:

1. The family and program director will be called.
2. If there is no response from the family, staff will call the child's emergency contacts.
3. If there is no response, the local Police Department will be called to pick up the child.
4. The director will continue to try and reach the families or other emergency contacts to make them aware of the situation.

A late fee will be applied for any child that is not picked up by 6 p.m. at a rate of \$1.00 per minute. The fee is applied per child if the family has more than one child at the center.

School Closings

If Sparta Area Schools are closed, the 3 year old preschool programs will also be closed. A notice will be sent out from the superintendent as well as on local television stations. Childcare will remain open from 6:30 am-6:00 pm unless it states otherwise. If you need to utilize childcare during this time a non-contract day will be applied. The center will need to be called prior to dropping off your child to be sure staffing is adequate and available.

Weather Policy

Sparta Early Childhood Center is required by the State of Michigan to provide 30 minutes minimum of daily outside time for every 3 hours open. Children will play outside unless the temperature exceeds 90 degrees with the heat index or is less than 10 degrees with the windchill. Please dress your child for the season's temperature and label your child's clothing with first and last name. If your child is well enough to attend school, he/she will be expected to participate in all classroom activities, including outdoor time.

Dress/Clothing

Clothing that is comfortable and suitable for indoor and outdoor play and messy activities is best for early childhood classrooms. Please provide an extra change of clothes that matches the season for any accidents that may happen. During cold weather, please send children to school with a hat, mittens, coat, snow pants and boots. Label everything with first and last name.

Rest Time

Per licensing, teachers must provide a quiet space and rest materials for children who attend full day programming. Rest time lasts 45 minutes. Quiet activities will be provided for children who do not wish to sleep during rest time. Consider providing a reasonably small size blanket for your child to use while they rest. Labeling personal items with a first and last name is a great way to ensure to get them back. Items must be able to fit on the shelf in their cubby area. Mats/cots will be sanitized following licensing guidance.

Vaccination Records

Our School Nurse monitors all vaccination records to make sure all students are up-to-date on their vaccinations. Letters will be sent home to inform parents if their child is close to being overdue on their vaccinations. Children must have a waiver signed by the Health Department if they are not up-to-date on vaccinations. Waivers are required to be renewed yearly at the Health Department. In addition, a copy of the signed waiver must be provided to the school. Parents who opt out of MICR reporting are required to provide immunization documentation yearly. The school nurse and ECC Director have the authority and will exclude children from school if immunization records are not up-to-date.

Medication Policy

Staff may not give or apply medication without prior written permission from a physician and a parent/guardian. All prescription and non-prescription medication must be in the original container and clearly labeled with the child's name. Prescription medication must have the pharmacy label and be given according to the directions on the original container. All medications require a Medication Authorization Form to be completed. Medication must be given directly to a staff member—never put it in a child's lunch box, backpack, or cubby.

Health and Communicable Disease

We attempt to limit the spread of communicable diseases in our classrooms. It is the policy of Sparta Early Childhood Center to temporarily exclude children, staff, and volunteers who may be infectious. If staff become aware that a person has a communicable disease, symptoms will be sent home in note form. Children must be free of symptoms and non-fever reducing medications for 24 hours before they are able to return to school.

Reasons for early childhood programs to exclude children include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Fever or oral temperature greater than 100.4 F.
- Rash with a fever.
- Diarrhea that is not associated with changes in diet or medication
- Vomiting
- Breathing difficulties, constant coughing, or constant runny nose.
- Skin sores that are weeping fluid
- Conjunctivitis with discharge

Families will be notified by phone if their child is ill and needs to be picked up. After one hour passes and the child has not been picked up additional individuals will be called on the emergency card.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

The center cleans and sanitizes surfaces and materials using a wash, rinse, and sanitize process.

Handwashing Policy and Procedure

Hand-washing is required by all when hand-washing would reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves or others. Children wash either independently or with staff assistance as needed.

Sample daily schedule for full day preschool

Arrival: Children take care of their belongings and wash their hands.

Breakfast: Children eat family style at the table with teachers.

Greeting and Read Aloud: Children are welcomed to the whole group with a song. Teachers introduce, read, and engage children in a book.

Small Group Time: Three to five children meet with a teacher for direct instruction while the other children engage in Select Learning Centers.

Work Time: This is free play time for children.

Cleanup Time: Children and teachers clean up together.

Music and Movement: Teachers and children dance and sing.

AM Outside Time: Children have many choices about how they play in the outdoor learning environment. Teachers supervise children for safety and join in their active outdoor play, supporting their initiatives and problem solving.

Lunch: Children choose what to eat and how much to eat of the food available. Teachers have meaningful conversations with the children. Children are encouraged to clean their own meal space including disposal of leftovers, wiping of tables, and pushing in their own chairs.

Quiet/Rest Time: Resting is a time for sleeping or quiet resting. After 20 minutes children who are awake are offered quiet activities.

Focus Groups: Teachers use assessment data to plan fun activities for the children.

Snack Time: Children have a light snack and talk about their day with their peers and teachers.

PM Outside Time: Children have many choices about how they play in the outdoor learning environment. Teachers supervise children for safety and join in their active outdoor play, supporting their initiatives and problem solving.

Departure: Children gather belongings and are dismissed to a parent/guardian.

Sample daily schedule for half day preschool

Arrival: Children take care of their belongings and wash their hands.

Greeting and Music and Movement: Children are welcomed to the whole group with a song. Teachers and children dance and sing.

Read Aloud: Children are welcomed to the whole group with a song. Teachers introduce, read, and engage children in a book.

Small Group Time: Three to five children meet with a teacher for direct instruction while the other children engage in Select Learning Centers.

Work Time: This is free play time for children.

Cleanup Time: Children and teachers clean up together.

Snack Time: Children have a light snack and talk about their day with their peers and teachers.

Outside Time: Children have many choices about how they play in the outdoor learning environment. Teachers supervise children for safety and join in their active outdoor play, supporting their initiatives and problem solving.

Departure: Children gather belongings and are dismissed to a parent/guardian.