



# UNIVERSAL PRE- KINDERGARTEN

At Amherst Central School District

## FAMILY HANDBOOK



Smallwood Drive Elementary  
Windermere Boulevard Elementary  
Amherst Community Church Child Care Ctr.  
Amherst Nursery School



[WWW.AMHERSTSCHOOLS.ORG/UPK](http://WWW.AMHERSTSCHOOLS.ORG/UPK)

The Amherst Central School District is happy to welcome you and your four year old to our Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program (UPK). We look forward to working with you, as we provide a wonderful year for your child. When home and school work together, great gains are made!

## **Philosophy**

UPK is a developmentally appropriate, child-centered educational program. It is our belief that children actively construct their understandings of the world through continuous interaction with their environment. They are eager to discover ideas, to look for patterns and relationships and to form generalizations. Through spontaneous activity, play, carefully prepared materials, and guided experiences, children gain confidence in their abilities as they explore the world around them. The early childhood classroom will provide opportunities for experimentation, exploration, discovery, challenge and interaction in a nurturing environment.

## **Curriculum**

Our program follows the guidelines for “developmentally appropriate practices”, established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Our curriculum is aligned with New York State Common Core Pre-K Standards, with an emphasis on early literacy and numeracy, as well as social-emotional development.

Developmentally appropriate practices emphasize that young children learn best when they are interacting with materials and people, and when they have a choice of activities. Therefore, a balance of open-ended and teacher supported learning activities, as well as purposefully developed classroom centers help to ensure children have a choice of activities that support play and learning. Our teachers work hard to provide classrooms that encourage meaningful learning for all children.

The importance of play is also highlighted in our classrooms. Through play, children can learn and practice important skills while exploring and constructing understandings about the world. Play helps to build skills in language and literacy, math, sciences and social interactions. Open-ended play encourages exploration, sparks imagination, encourages risk taking, and provides opportunities to interact freely with peers and teachers.

## Academic Readiness

New York State requires that ALL New Entrants to the school district complete a developmental screening, which includes cognitive development, motor skills development, language and literacy development (including a speech and language screening), as well as a vision and hearing screening. These will be completed by mid-October and the data from these screenings help the district identify any students who may require additional services or support to help them be successful. Your child's teacher will notify you if any further evaluation is recommended.

## Program Information

**We offer full-day and half-day programs**

### Locations

**Smallwood Drive Elementary School (8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.).**

Address: 300 Smallwood Drive Phone: 362-2100

**Windermere Boulevard Elementary School (9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.)**

Address: 291 Windermere Boulevard Phone: 362-4100

**Amherst Community Church Child Care Center (9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.)**

Address: 77 Washington Highway Phone: 834-9701

**Amherst Nursery School (9:15 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.)**

Address: 350 Saratoga Road Phone: 839-0298

### Transportation

Bus transportation is provided to all Pre-K sites (listed above) to **any student who is 4 years old.**

The bus will pick up and drop off your child in front of your home. You will be notified of the times by email through the Amherst Parent Portal. **Parents are expected to be outside waiting with their preschooler for pick up and drop off.** A bus attendant will meet you at the door of the bus to either help your child onto the bus or to help them depart the bus. **The bus attendant will not leave the bus.** The bus attendant will buckle all children into their seats and ensure that the children arrive safely at school. Bus tags (child's name, address, and phone numbers) will be placed on your child's backpack. **Please make sure that the bus tags are always with your child.** If you have specific bus concerns, please call District Office Transportation at 362- 3045 or First Student at 684-9440. No food or drink is permitted on the bus.

## **Meals**

Children eat breakfast and lunch in our full day classrooms (snack in our half day classroom). Meals are served family style which means we try to achieve the feeling one would get if they sat down to a meal with their family at a dinner table. Meals will be served in the classroom. Staff and children will sit down together. Children will learn self-help skills as they serve themselves and pass the food. They will socialize, learn about nutrition and practice table manners.

## **Family Involvement**

A child's success in school is greatly increased when parents are involved in their education. You are your child's most important teacher, therefore parental involvement is another important requirement of the NYS Education Department Pre-K regulations.

There are many opportunities for parental involvement and we encourage you to participate in as many ways as you are able:

- Communicate regularly with your child's teacher. Share any special needs your child may have, events at home that may impact classroom participation, absences, etc...
- Check your child's backpack daily and talk to them about their day.
- Volunteer in your child's classroom. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to volunteer. Teachers will set up a signup calendar each month letting you know days/times volunteers are welcome in the classroom.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences. Conferences are in Fall and Spring and provide an important opportunity to gain information regarding your child's progress in school. Attendance is expected.
- Attend special events in the classroom for parents and children.

## **Attendance**

As a student in our UPK Program, your child must attend school 5 days a week. Frequent unexcused absences will cause your child to lose the opportunity to attend Amherst Central's Pre-K program.

## **Illnesses or Absences**

- When your child is sick, please keep your child home. Any child with a temperature over 100 degrees, that has an undiagnosed rash, is vomiting or has any communicable disease (strep throat, flu, chicken pox) is not allowed to be in school.
- When your child returns, please send in a note explaining their absence.
- If you know your child will be out of school for an extended period, please let your teacher know at least 2 weeks ahead of time. Extended absences are highly discouraged as they create a loss in your child's continuity of learning. Extended absences may also jeopardize your child's continued participation in the program if we have a waiting list placement.
- When your child will not be in school, please notify their school office

## **Health Office**

A school nurse is available during school hours at both Windermere and Smallwood. There may be times when your child becomes ill at school. In the event of an illness, the nurse or school director will contact a parent/guardian/designated person listed on the emergency card. Please notify the school immediately if there are any changes in the contact information.

## **Tardiness**

Please ensure your child is on time for school. This helps ensure your child has every opportunity to succeed in our program. Arriving late or leaving school early creates lost learning time for your child, a disruption to their routine, as well as a disruption to the rest of the class.

## **School Dress**

Please dress your child in play clothes and sneakers. They will be playing both inside and outside and will have a gross motor time each day. Your child will be painting, building on the floor, and doing all sorts of messy things. Paint smocks will be used, but we cannot guarantee that they will not get dirty while at Pre-K. Please do not send your child in fancy clothes. Comfortable sneakers/gym shoes are essential.

## **Progress Reports**

Throughout the year, your child's teacher will conduct assessments of your child's educational skills and continually monitor their progress. This information will be shared with you at parent-teacher conferences. You will also receive a progress report at your first conference and then again at the end of the year.

## **Important Phone Numbers**



- Smallwood Drive Main Office: 362-2100
  - Attendance Line: 362-2249
  - Nurse: 362-2108
- Windermere Boulevard Main Office: 362-4100
  - Attendance Line: 362-4249
  - Nurse: 362-4136
- Amherst Community Church Child Care Center: 834-9701
- Amherst Nursery School: 839-0298
- Pre-K Coordinator: Karen Redding 362-4184  
email: [kredding@amherstschoools.org](mailto:kredding@amherstschoools.org)
- First Student Transportation: 684-9440
- District Transportation: 362-3045  
Coordinator: Renae Cortright  
email: [rcortright@amherstschoools.org](mailto:rcortright@amherstschoools.org)

**If you need to reach a teacher, please email the teacher or call the school office and leave a message with the receptionist.**

**District website is [www.amherstschoools.org](http://www.amherstschoools.org)**