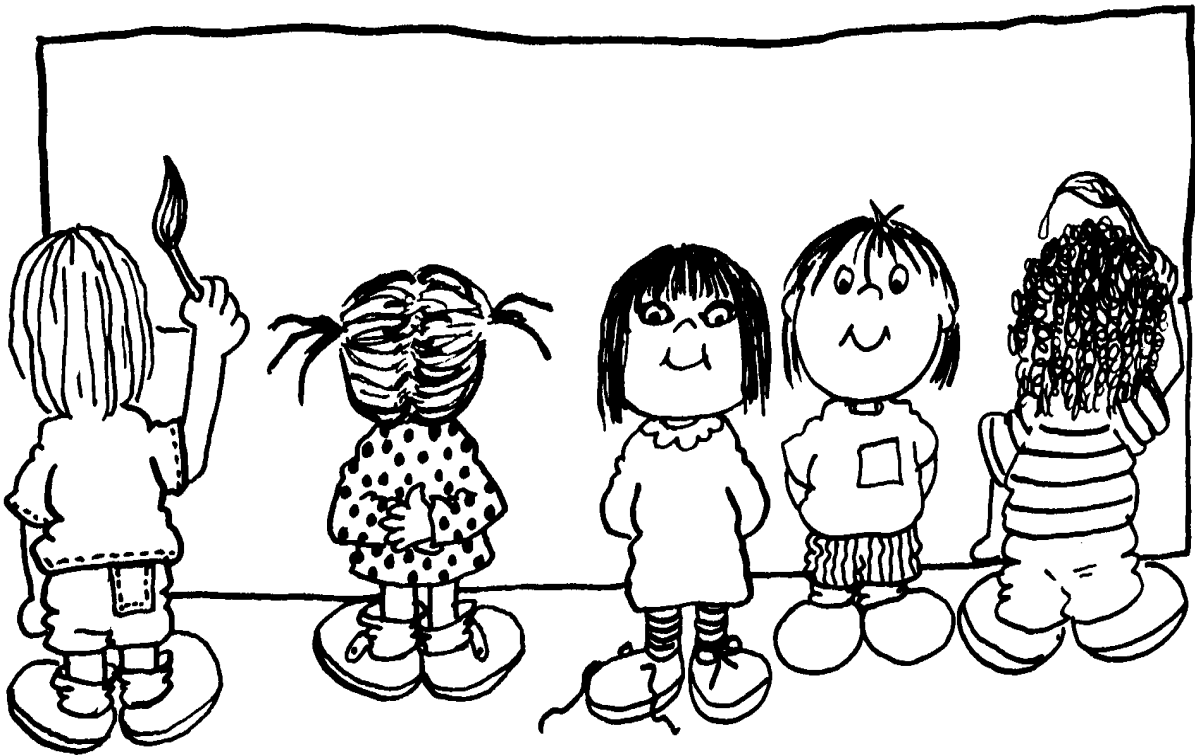


Welcome to
Amherst Central School District
Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Family Handbook

With classrooms located at
Windermere Boulevard Elementary School
Amherst Community Church Child Care Center
Amherst Nursery School



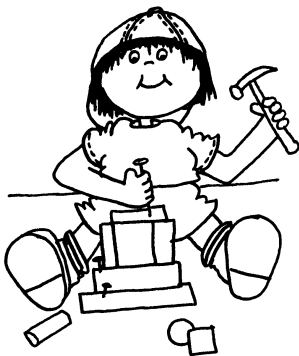
Anthony Panella, Superintendent, Amherst Central School District
Julie Flanagan, Principal, Windermere Boulevard Elementary School
Karen Redding, Pre-K Coordinator, Windermere Boulevard Elementary School

Thank you for enrolling your child in Amherst Central School District's Pre-Kindergarten Program. We welcome you and your child to our program. We are looking forward to working with you, as we provide a wonderful year for your preschooler. When home and school work together, great gains are made!

This Family Handbook should be helpful in answering some of your questions about our program. We encourage you to become familiar with it. However, this handbook won't answer all of your questions, so please feel free to ask your child's teacher or call the Early Childhood office. We will do our best to answer your questions, help you learn about our Pre-K program, and grow your knowledge of children. You will find that one of the best ways to learn about our program is by volunteering in the classrooms. When you volunteer, you help out with all aspects of your child's school day and have great fun while doing it!

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EARLY CHILDHOOD PHILOSOPHY

The Amherst Central School district believes that the child is the major focus of the early childhood school program. Each child brings unique experiences, expectations, emotions and attitudes, and abilities to the classroom. It is essential that the individual characteristics of each child be accepted, understood, and nurtured.



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. The teacher will work cooperatively to foster the development of the child while respecting the dignity, the rights, and the values of the home. We believe the early childhood environment should provide opportunities for experimentation, exploration, discovery, challenge and interaction. An appropriate atmosphere of understanding, concern and compassion should surround the young child in his/her first school experience.

We strongly believe that early school experiences contribute positively to the development of adults who will live self-fulfilling lives and be effective members of our democratic society.

OUR CURRICULUM

Our program follows the guidelines for "developmentally appropriate practices", established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These guidelines are based on research in child development. Our curriculum has been developed using the New York State Standards for Pre-Kindergarten. We plan activities and experiences for our students based on these standards. Developmentally appropriate practices also 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.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Amherst's Pre-Kindergarten Program has three locations:

1. **Windermere Boulevard Elementary School**
Address: 291 Windermere Blvd. Phone: 362-4100
2. **Amherst Community Church Child Care Center (ACCCCC)**
Address: 77 Washington Hwy. Phone: 834-9701
3. **Amherst Nursery School (ANS)**
Address: 350 Saratoga Rd. Phone: 839-0298

Times:

The Pre-K Program is in session Monday through Friday. Hours are:


| WBS | ACCCCC | ANS |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>AM Session: 9:00-11:30</i> | <i>AM Session: 9:00 - 11:30</i> | <i>AM Session: 9:15 - 11:45</i> |
| <i>PM Session: 12:45 - 3:15</i> | <i>PM Session: 12:30 - 3:00</i> | |

The district determines placement into either the AM or PM session.

Classroom Staffing:

Each class will have one teacher and a teacher aide. One class will have extra support for children with special needs. There will be approximately 16-18 children in each class.

Transportation to the WBS Location:

- Bus transportation is provided to this location only. 
The bus will pick up your child at your home or at your child's daycare (located in the district). You will be notified of the time by mail. **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 seat and ensure that the children arrive safely at school. Bus tags (with the child's name, drop off location, and pertinent 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- 3035 or First Student at 684-9440. **No food or drink is permitted on the bus.**
- There is no transportation to the **ACCCCC** site or the **ANS** site.

Meals:

Children eat breakfast, lunch or snack dependent on the session/site they are enrolled in. Meals are served family style which means we will 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.

Attendance:

Attending school is essential to student success. Irregular attendance and tardiness creates confusion for your child. Most importantly, your child will miss an opportunity to learn. Frequent unexcused absences will cause your child to lose the opportunity to attend Amherst Central's Pre-K program.

Illnesses or Absences

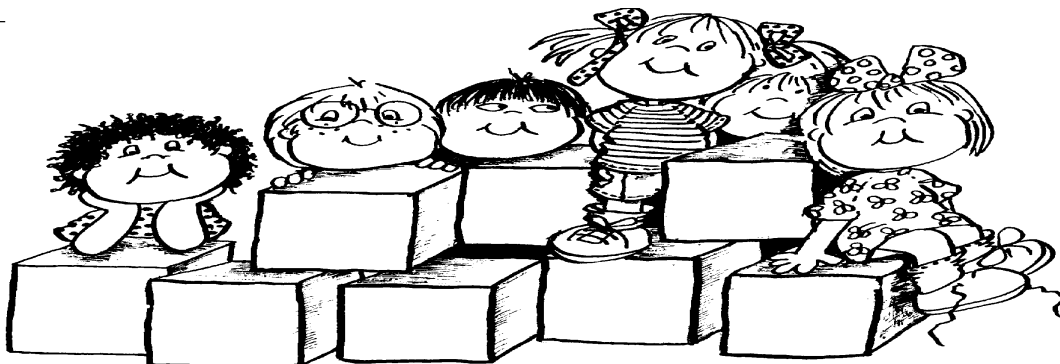
1. When your child is sick please keep your child home. Any child with a temperature over 100 degrees, that has an undiagnosed rash, is vomiting or has any communicable disease (strep throat, flu, chicken pox...) is not to be in school.
2. When your child returns, please send in a note with your child explaining their absence.
3. If you know your child will be out of school for an extended period, please let your teacher know ahead of time.
4. WBS - When your child will not be in school, please notify the bus company (684-9440) and call the Parent Call Back (362-4249).
5. ACCCCC - Please call (834-9701) or ANS - Please call (839-0298).

Health Office:

A school nurse is available during school hours. She is housed at our WBS site and provides consultation to our other two sites. There may be times when your child becomes ill at school. In the event of an illness the nurse 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.

School Dress:

Please dress your child in play clothes. They will be playing inside and outside. They 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.



FAMILY INVOLVEMENT



When families and schools join forces - great things happen for children! Family involvement is an essential component of Amherst Central's Pre-K Program. You are your child's most important teacher and we look forward to working with you! Besides the daily opportunities for communication (notes, e-mails, phone calls...), there are many opportunities for family involvement.

- 1. Classroom Volunteers:** Volunteering in the classroom provides opportunities for families, staff, and children. **Each family is expected to volunteer in the classroom at least 3 times throughout the school year.** Volunteering allows you to really experience Pre-K with your child. Your child will be thrilled to have you at school. You will help work with children during center time to gain a better understanding of school's expectations and then be able to support that learning at home. Besides all of the wonderful educational opportunities - spending the day in Pre-K is a lot of fun!
[Please note: While you are helping in the classroom: cell phones are not allowed to be used, pictures or video are NOT allowed to be taken and siblings are not permitted to accompany a parent volunteer.]
- 2. Parent-Teacher Conferences:**
 - **Parent - Teacher Conferences are scheduled during the fall and spring.** These opportunities allow you to gain important information regarding your child's progress in school. Attendance is expected.
- 3. Parent/Child Activities:** Throughout the school year you will be provided with many opportunities to participate in parent/child activities such as concerts, story hours, book fairs... These will be scheduled during school hours and in the evening. These events are both fun and educational. They will promote a better understanding of child development and learning.

SPECIFIC OVERALL GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

The focus in the classroom should always be the child. The goal of our education staff and volunteers is to teach through play. All staff are expected to teach, play and interact with the children during all activities. Through play we teach children: positive interactions with peers, use of appropriate language, daily self-help skills, physical exercise and pre-academic skills, and coordination of their large and small muscles.

- Speak in a calm, kind voice. This models the type of voice we would like to hear.
- When you speak to a child, first walk over to him and get his/her attention
- When giving directions or expectations for an activity, keep words simple, sentences short, expectations clear, and stay positive.
- "Don't" should be a word that is used at a minimum

Use phrases like:

| | | |
|----------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| "hands down" | vs. | "don't hit" |
| "walking feet" | vs | "no running" |
| "that's not okay" | vs | "that's bad" |
| "paint on the paper" | vs | "stop painting your arm" |

- Please sit whenever you can. You are nearer the child's level there, and it will be easier for him to gain your help and attention.
- Do not carry children.
- Do not hold children on your lap. If they need comfort, please sit behind or beside them.
- Watch children - follow their lead.
- Acknowledge positive behavior in classroom. Always remember to accentuate the positive. Please use descriptive statements rather than attaching a value to what you see. Try "I see Johnny picking up the blocks," instead of "Johnny you're such a good boy."
- Manners are "caught" not "taught". Treat children with the same respect you treat adults.
- Do not unnecessarily interrupt a child's activity.
- Avoid ever laughing at a child's efforts.

LEARNING CENTERS

When you visit the classroom and see a room filled with children playing, you might wonder what the children are learning. All the classrooms promote positive learning experiences through play in the all the developmental domains. Classrooms will have learning areas or "centers" with sufficient quantities of child accessible books, supplies, and materials. All classrooms will have space to accommodate individual, small and large group instruction. An outdoor play area nearby with equipment and supplies for exercising large muscles and developing balance and coordination is used frequently. Appropriate bathroom facilities are easily accessible to children and available throughout the day.

| Center | Material | Adult's Role | Learning |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| ART | Easels, paint, scissors, glue, playdough, various sizes and types of paper, collage materials... | Encourage independent creative art, demonstrate how to use materials, do not make models to follow, describe what you see | Small motor coordination, creative expression, pre-writing activities, understanding symbols/ pre-reading |
| BLOCK AREA | Various size blocks, vehicles, play people, animals... | Help to negotiate turn taking , extend play scenarios (where should the road go?), follow child's lead, keep kids safe | Visual spatial skills, social skills, language skills, creative play, math concepts (balance, geometry, counting...) |
| LIBRARY AREA (STORY/ QUIET RUG) | Books, tapes, records, puppets, flannel board stories... | Read, read, and read. Listen, listen, and listen. | Literacy and social skills (listening, turn taking, language skills, phonemic awareness...) |
| DRAMATIC PLAY | Dress up, dolls, house furniture & props (Materials change based on theme.) | Help to negotiate turn taking, follows child's lead, extend play scenarios (what should we do with the baby?) | Recreating the world around them, social skills, language skills, creative expression |
| MANIPULATIVE AREA | Puzzles, peg boards, legos, building toys... | Help when children ask, notice patterns, describe what you see | Small motor coordination, science & math skills |
| SAND/WATER/ SENSORY AREA | Sand, water, rice, various sensory materials | Encourage kids to pour, measure, keep smock on | Science, math, and self help skills |
| OUTDOOR AREA | Playground, bikes, balls, outdoor art | Keep kids safe, teach new skills, run & laugh | Gross motor skills, turn taking |
| SCIENCE AREA | Various items found in our natural world, as well as content-related materials. | Listen to student observations, help make connections and ask questions about what you see. | Science, math and language skills |

Important Phone Numbers:



- Windermere Office: 362-4100
- Amherst Community Church Child Care Center: 834-9701
- Amherst Nursery School: 839-0298
- Parent Call Back: 362-4249 *WBS Site Only
- First Student Transportation: 684-9440
- District Transportation: 362-3035
- Windermere Health Office (Nurse Lisa): 362-4136

Please do not call your child's classroom number during school hours. If you need to reach a teacher, please call 362-4100 and leave a message with the receptionist.

Information can also be found on our website:

www.amherstschoools.org