

Early Childhood Supplemental Family Handbook 2026 – 2027

Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School
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Section 1

Welcome

Welcome to CREC's Early Childhood Program. Our goal is to provide your child with a healthy, safe and developmentally appropriate learning environment. Each CREC school offers a unique theme that allows children to identify, refine and develop their talents and interests. Each school provides a diverse learning community that prepares children for living and learning as global citizens in a diverse environment. Our schools offer a personalized educational approach for each child in a curriculum designed to spark a lasting appreciation for knowledge. The focus of our early childhood curriculum is not just an accumulation of facts and skills but rather the strengthening of an ability to reason and think independently.

Mission of CREC Schools

The CREC Mission Statement is: Equity, excellence, and success for all, through high-quality educational services

Early Childhood Program Philosophy and Curriculum

We believe that children learn best in an environment where their interests and opinions are supported, their solutions to problems are encouraged, and active learning through play is valued. Our philosophy emphasizes respect for self, others and the classroom environment.

CREC's Early Childhood Program curriculum has its base in developmentally appropriate practice and uses the State of Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) as a guideline for curriculum development. The CT ELDS are learning and developmental outcomes to be intentionally addressed through planned experiences, materials and interactions. Learning outcomes are achieved through:

- a variety of hands-on discovery activities and materials on a daily basis that support learning goals
- responsive teaching staff who meet the individual needs of the children and families we serve
- reflective practices that create an environment of inclusion and honor diversity
- partnership with families that fosters strong reciprocal relationships and achieves mutually desired goals

Our curriculum is implemented using teacher observation and documentation to plan relevant, developmentally appropriate experiences where children can explore, experiment, play, and ask questions. We use the State of Connecticut Documentation and Observation for Teaching System (DOTS) in conjunction with the ELDS for collecting evidence about children's interests, abilities, skills and behaviors, for planning additional supports, for summarizing children's progress and communicating around common goals.

Ana Grace Curriculum Statement

The Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School, located in Bloomfield, it is an inter-district magnet school operated and managed by the Capital Region Education Council (CREC). Our school's theme is the arts. We believe that every child is an artist and we provide students with the opportunity to express themselves through the arts.

Our school features an early childhood program for 3-4 year olds within an elementary school that services children from kindergarten through grade 5. Our Early Childhood Program serves up to 120 children each year in four classrooms, all of which adhere to a developmentally appropriate teacher child ratio of 1:10. Children enrolled in the Early Childhood Program are guaranteed placement in the K-5 magnet school. The Early Childhood Program follows nationally recognized standards and best practices including NAEYC Accreditation Standards for Early Childhood programs. The faculty consists of highly qualified, early childhood certified teachers who design, develop and implement the curriculum with assistant teachers who are skilled and trained in early childhood education. The Capital Region Education Council offers educational opportunities to its students regardless of race, color, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation or genetic information.

All of our students, from PK 3 to 5th grade, receive instruction in all four of the arts concentrations, theatre, music, dance and art on a weekly basis. Our dance core begins with pre-ballet and tap and is complimented by additional styles like jazz, world dance, and hip-hop. Theatre and storytelling begin with our students in pre-k and evolve into improvisation and scene work for our older students. In music, the concepts of rhythm and musicality are explored with our youngest students who express their learning through songs, games and movements. This leads to our older students who become accomplished choral members, note readers and musicians. Instrumental music begins in the 1st grade with Suzuki violin. Students migrate to the string instrument that suits them and have the choice to switch to percussion or band instruments in the 3rd grade. Art is explored through various mediums in both two and three dimensions. They learn about art masters and experiment with various styles and materials.

Section 2 –Classroom Routines and Procedures

A Typical Day in our Program

Greetings/Attendance	Teachers greet children when they arrive. The students are offered breakfast and then participate in table activities or read books.
Morning Meeting	This daily meeting brings the students and teachers together and is comprised of the following components: ● Greeting and daily announcements ● Morning message ● Whole group activity ● Songs ● Social curriculum/community building
Snack Time	Self-help skills will be emphasized.
Small Group Time	Teachers initiate an activity focusing on the CT ELDS and Heggarty.
Centers/Choice Time	Children carry out play plans, play in learning centers with purpose, solve problems and construct knowledge.
Specials	The students participate in at least one Special class (music, art, physical education, or library) each day.
Story Time	Teachers read stories to the class and children participate in literacy related activities.
Lunch	Children may either bring lunch from home or they can choose to eat school lunch. Self-help skills will be emphasized.
Recess	Children participate in energetic outdoor play and contact with nature.
Quiet/Naptime	Children rest/nap comfortably while listening to quiet music.
Closing Circle Time	The class reviews the day, shares a story or participates in movement games, or songs.
We recognize that routine and structure are essential for a preschooler's sense of well-being. Therefore, each classroom has a predictable schedule from 8:40 a.m. to 3:35 p.m. Monday through Friday.	

Safe Arrival and Departure

The Early Childhood Program is a full day, full week program. Children are expected to attend daily. It is important that each child begin and end the school day on time. When children arrive late to school they miss one of the most important components of the day, morning meeting. During morning meeting, the day's events are reviewed, rules, expectations, routines and other information your child needs to be successful. Children have the opportunity to greet one another and plan their day together. Thus, it is very important that children arrive on time for school.

Students who do not take the bus to school are dropped off to the school using the valet service. Parents drive up in the pick-up lane and students are greeted by school staff who then assist students to the classroom. The same procedure is followed at dismissal time where students are called from the pick-up room by school staff to greet parents. Office staff will ensure your child gets to class upon late arrival or is delivered to you in the office for early dismissal.

To support children's health and reduce exposure to exhaust, families and visitors are strongly discouraged from idling vehicles in school parking and drop-off areas. Vehicles may idle only when needed during extreme heat or cold to maintain safe interior or engine temperatures.

All children will be accounted for with a procedure developed by the classroom teacher that includes signing in at arrival and signing out at departure.

Emergency response

In the unlikely event of an emergency it is our greatest concern to keep your child safe. If we need to evacuate the building due to a gas smell or something of that nature. The students will be taken outside and away from the building where attendance is taken to ensure that everyone is accounted for. You will receive a message through school messenger to alert you of the event and a follow up email with more information once the situation has been resolved.

If we must evacuate to a new location, the students will be escorted out of the building, through the parking lot, up the hill, where we will meet at 7 Waterside Drive. Attendance will be taken to ensure everyone is present. Parents will be notified by school messenger and a follow up email will be sent when the students return to the building. If parents are instructed to pick up their child, reunification will happen at 7 Waterside Drive.

Certifications/Trainings

All faculty and staff must complete all DCF mandated training. Preschool teachers and staff who work directly with children must maintain current pediatric CPR and first aid certifications. New staff have a timeline to complete training and will not be left alone with children until fully certified.

Emergency Response (Drills)

Ana Grace is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of all children and staff during emergencies. Staff follow established emergency procedures, participate in required training and drills, and work with CREC and emergency responders as appropriate.

In the event of a fire, building hazard, or other emergency requiring evacuation, staff will calmly guide children to a designated safe location, take attendance, and account for all children and staff. Emergency services will be contacted when necessary. We practice this drill no less than seven times during the school year.

Families are notified through the weekly newsletter that a drill has been held. Teachers are encouraged to talk with their students after a drill to answer any questions and make sure that the students understand the purpose of the drill and work through any anxiety they may have.

During severe weather or another situation requiring shelter indoors, staff will move children to the designated safe area and supervise them until the danger has passed or further instructions are provided. Attendance will be checked, and children will remain with authorized staff.

Families will receive updates through School Messenger in real time so that parents are fully informed of the situation and if the event impacts dismissal or pick up procedures.

If a child experiences a serious injury or medical emergency, the nurse will provide appropriate first, contact emergency medical services when needed, and notify the child's parent or guardian as soon as possible. Staff will follow the child's documented medical plans and applicable program procedures.

If a security threat occurs, staff will follow established CREC emergency procedures and directions from law enforcement or other emergency responders. Staff will keep children supervised in a secure location and account for all children and staff.

Families will be notified when it is safe and appropriate to do so. To protect children and staff, the program may delay communication or restrict access during an active emergency. Families should not come to the building unless instructed, as doing so may interfere with emergency response efforts. Ana Grace practices these drills at least 3 times a year. Families are notified in advance and students are prepped by their teachers so an not to cause fear or anxiety.

During an emergency, Ana Grace will contact families through school messenger to ensure they have all the information that they need. Families are responsible for keeping their contact information and authorized pick-up lists current.

When reunification or an alternate pick-up location is necessary, families will receive instructions about the location, timing, identification requirements, and authorized release procedures. Children will be released only to individuals authorized by the family and in accordance with program procedures. Staff will maintain supervision until each child is safely released.

Families should follow official instructions, avoid calling or entering the building during an active emergency unless directed, and keep communication lines available for updates.

Using the Bathroom

As a preschool program, we do not have the essential equipment or staffing to meet optimal health standards for diapering children. Therefore, families are strongly encouraged to ensure that their children are toilet trained **before** starting in the Early Childhood Program at the beginning of the school year. The exception would be if this is identified in an IEP or 504 Plan. We understand the transition to school may result in some initial toileting accidents. We will work with the child's family to ensure consistency both at home and at school. Children should be as self-sufficient as possible. Children are more successful when they wear pants with no snaps, buttons or zippers. Pants with elastic waists and underwear (not pull-ups) support children's independence with toileting. Early

Childhood teachers will provide reminders to guide and support children who have had a toileting accident. Diapering Policy Please click on the link to view diapering policy.

Clothing

Children play daily with sand, water, paint and play dough. Smocks are provided for water play and painting but sometimes clothing gets wet or soiled. Children are encouraged to wear clothing that they do not mind getting dirty and that they can easily pull on and off by themselves as needed. Please provide your child with two sets of extra clothing at school at all times. This includes: easy to pull on/off pants, socks, underwear and shirts. **Please label all clothing with your child's name on them.**

Outdoor Play

We play outside every day, weather permitting. The school nurse informs the teaching staff if recommendations from health authorities or dangerous conditions prevent outdoor play. Please ensure your child comes to school with the appropriate outer wear. Please label all outerwear with your child's initials or name. Playground-safe shoes are important. Please ensure your child wears non-slip, closed toed shoes (sneakers are ideal).

Please apply UVA/UVB (SPF15 or higher) sunscreen protection on your child before school. Teachers do not apply sunscreen. Sunscreen is not allowed in children's cubbies. Please contact the school nurse if your child requires another application of sunscreen during the day.

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellant due to high risk of insect born disease, please apply this to your child prior to arriving at school. Teachers do not apply insect repellant. Insect repellant is not allowed in children's cubbies. Please contact the school nurse if your child requires another application of repellant during the day.

Snacks/Meals

Daily snacks are an important part of meeting the nutritional needs of young children. Snacks include:

- fruit/vegetable
- dairy (cheese, yogurt, milk)
- meat or protein (beans)
- bread (crackers)

If a child has food allergies, the school nurse will develop a care plan that will be shared with all relevant teaching staff.

We are not allowed to offer children high risk foods for choking such as whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, hard pretzels, raw carrots, raw peas, or hot dogs. This applies to foods served as well as foods brought from home.

At Ana Grace, the students eat snack everyday. Families are encouraged to send a snack to school with their child. If a student does not have a snack, a snack will be provided from the approved snack list.

Lunches
We are not allowed to heat food brought from home.

PK Students eat at specific times each day in the classroom. Ana Grace staff are with the students during their lunch time. Your child has the option to eat school lunch or bring lunch from home.

Rest Time
Our daily schedule includes a balance of quiet and active activities. Rest Time is scheduled for one hour each day with a settling in period beforehand. Please provide a **small** blanket that can be easily stored in your child's cubby. Please label this blanket with your child's name on it. This blanket should be taken home each Friday afternoon to be laundered and returned the following Monday.

Toys From Home
Please keep toys from home at home, as they can be lost or broken at school. A small stuffed animal is acceptable for rest time.

Celebrations (birthdays and holidays)
Classroom celebrations involving food are not allowed. Due to various food allergies, as well as medical conditions, treats must not be brought into school.

Party Invitations

Invitations can only be distributed at school if every student in the class is invited.

Section 3 – Health and Safety

Handwashing Practices
Young children are particularly susceptible to illness once they begin school, affecting health and causing missed educational opportunities. While illness is not always preventable, we take measures to reduce the risk of infection by practicing good handwashing and cleaning procedures. We will teach the proper handwashing procedure as part of our curriculum, and we ask all children to wash hands upon arrival, before and after meals, after playing outdoors and after using the toilet. We will use hand sanitizers as an alternative when hands are not visibly soiled. Staff must wash or sanitize hands before and after feeding a child, before and after administering medication, after handling garbage and after cleaning.

Section 4 – Home-School Communication

Communication between Family and Teacher
A strong family-school partnership is important to the success of our Early Childhood Program. In addition to the Family-Teacher conferences held over the year, each teacher sends home regular updates via Seesaw, newsletters and or emails keeping families apprised as to what is happening in the classroom. Drop-off and Pick-Up times are an opportunity to share brief updates or ask quick questions of your child's teacher. You may also contact your child's teacher by phone or email.

If you have questions or concerns your first step to resolution is to contact the classroom teacher, if you need additional assistance please contact the school's administrative team (860-677-0380), if you

still need additional assistance to resolve your concern you can reach out to CREC central to speak with a member of CREC superintendent's team (860-524-4096).

We encourage you to share with us about your child. You are the experts and we appreciate your input so we can best serve your child. Please share home observations and thoughts during intake conferences and parent conferences. We also encourage you to share updates through Seesaw, emails and phone calls. We value your partnership and believe this is the best way to ensure that your child's needs are being met.

Conferences

At Ana Grace, an Intake Conference is held at the beginning of the year so that families can tell us about their child as seen through their eyes. Together we develop mutual goals for each child. Twice a year, in December and March, we address children's interests and progress during family teacher conferences.

We encourage families to share their own observations from home as part of the child assessment process. This very valuable collaboration can take place during intake and parent conferences, notes or photos through Seesaw, completing family input forms or emailing the teacher examples of skills, interests, language, routines, or new learning noticed at home.

Marking Periods	**Parent-Teacher Conferences**
Parent Intake Conferences	September
First	December
Second	March
Third	Report Cards go home on LAST day of school

End of Year Transitions

At Ana Grace, the Early Childhood Program is a two year program with children split into Prek3 and Prek4 classrooms. At the end of each school year, teachers will help prepare each child for the transition to summer and for kindergarten if eligible. Children moving on to kindergarten will visit the kindergarten classrooms to familiarize themselves with the new environment.

Under some circumstances, the pre-school teacher and the principal may recommend to the family that a child remains in the pre-school program for a third year because they believe developmentally the child would benefit from an additional year. In most cases, children who are age-eligible will move on to kindergarten. To ensure a smooth transition, preschool and kindergarten teachers meet to discuss individual children's needs at the end of preschool.