



Saco Pre-K Parent Handbook

Vision:

Saco Pre-K is an exciting community where all love to learn and to celebrate growth.

Mission:

Our mission at Saco Pre-K is to provide the community with a safe, engaging, learning environment for our youngest learners which embraces the unique strengths of each child and family and empowers them to grow and learn as part of our Saco School Department and beyond.

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Saco School Department Pre-K Program

5 Willey Road
Saco, ME 04072

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Pre-K Director: J'Aime Walker
207-494-9630 ext. 7133

Welcome to the Saco School Department Pre-K program. This parent handbook is designed to inform you about the policies and procedures of this Pre-K program. Please keep it with you for the term of your child's enrollment as it is a great reference to help answer questions that may arise throughout the duration of your child's education in preschool.

Academic Program Philosophy and Goals

The purpose of this program is to provide preschool age children with critical early experience to ensure academic, social and professional achievement. Through a developmentally appropriate curriculum, we offer high quality early care that will embrace, engage and empower all young children to meet their maximum potential. We utilize a play-based emergent curriculum to provide hands-on learning to foster children's physical, emotional and social well-being. The program is inclusive, built on the philosophy that all children can learn. Through a collaborative format we foster a meaningful relationship with students and families. Our highly qualified, caring educators work to maintain an inclusive classroom for all students. Whether a child is showing signs of special needs, has a diagnosis, is an advanced learner or anything in between, our teachers work with you to create an appropriate learning environment founded in the balance of direct instruction through research-based practices and most importantly...play! We recognize families are the experts of their children. Through a collaborative format, we foster a meaningful relationship with students and families applying expertise of your child to our academic planning. We understand our students are your young ones and strive to maintain an open-door program to allow families to engage, collaborate and experience the joys of early education. Our child centered approach supports our mission to provide all students with access to high quality teaching, rigorous learning opportunities and prepare students for a global society. We actively apply the Maine Early Learning Standards and value the development of the whole child.

Admissions

Our program is a public-school Pre-kindergarten program open to all students who turn four (4) before October 15th. Students who turn 5 prior to October 15th should register for public Kindergarten. Our **maximum capacity is 128 students**. Registration can be completed on our website www.sacoschools.org.

Before and After School Programs

Families interested in early morning care and afterschool should contact the Saco Community Center for more information about the Before/After Care Programs. These are separate programs from preschool and as such the registration is not handled by Saco School Department Staff. For more information please access the [Saco Community Center Program Flyer](#). For registration and financial assistance for these programs please access the [Saco Community Center Newpage](#).

Child Ratios and Maximum Group Size

A major responsibility of the staff is to ensure the health and safety of each child entrusted to our care. Children will be supervised at all times and staff will be alert to the safety needs of children, anticipating possible hazards and taking precautionary action and preventive measures. **The program is to have a maximum of 16 students per classroom with one lead teacher and an education technician III at all times.** Staff evaluations are completed annually in compliance with Saco's Professional Growth and Development Plans.

Teacher qualifications must meet the Maine Department of Education certification as Teacher as well as other credentials required to be "Highly Qualified" according to State and Federal standards, degree(s) required in area to be taught, a current State of Maine Criminal History Records Check approval, and current First Aid/CPR training.

Educational Technician III must have three (3) years post-secondary education or a combination of ninety (90) hours of approved study in an education field, a valid state driver's license, State of Maine Criminal History Records Check approval, and current First Aid/CPR training.

Daily Schedules

Routine is an important component to provide structure and stability in young children's lives. We offer two program formats to best accommodate the needs of our students and families. The following is a model schedule for each of our program formats. However, we also provide flexibility in our schedule to adapt when necessary. This schedule meets licensing requirements for play, outside time and rest times.

Full Day Schedule Example	Half Day Schedule Example
Arrival/Tabletop Center	Arrival/Tabletop Centers
Breakfast	Breakfast/Afternoon Snack
Circle time	Circle Time
Freeplay	Freeplay
Centers	Centers
Outside	Outside/Snack
Lunch/Rest	Art
Music and Movement	Music and Movement
Centers	Goodbye Circle
Freeplay	
Snack	
Art	
Outside	
Goodbye Circle	

Emergencies and Accidents

The Saco School Department has devised several procedures to follow in the event an emergency would occur while your child is in our care. In the event of an emergency, staff will follow the instructions posted in the classroom describing emergency procedures to be followed ensuring that children have arrived at the designated area. In order to prepare students for the unlikely event we would need to evacuate, the program will conduct regular drills.

In the unlikely event of an environmental threat or a threat of violence, the staff will secure the children in the safest location possible, contact and follow the directions given by proper authorities and contact parents and guardians as soon as the situation allows. An incident report would also be provided to parents and guardians.

As is Saco School Department policy, all staff members working with children have received training in First Aid, CPR and Communicable Diseases. In the case of a minor accident/injury, staff will consult with our school nurse, or administer basic first aid (if nurse is not available) and tender, loving care.

In the event of a more serious injury/illness, our school nurse will be notified to administer first aid, and notify the parents or guardians of the child. If the injury/illness is severe, the school nurse will contact the parents/guardians to make a determination of transporting the child to the hospital themselves or utilizing emergency medical services.

In the event that parents/guardians and child's designated emergency contacts cannot be reached, and the injury is severe, the school nurse will determine whether emergency medical services are to be contacted. A staff member will attend the hospital with the child and provide available health records. Continual attempts will be made to reach parents/guardians and emergency contacts until contact is made.

In the event of any accident or injury, a report will be completed and placed in the child's medical file. Parents/guardians will need to review and sign the report. Events that may result in an accident/injury report include: if the child has an illness or injury which requires first aid; if the child receives a bump or blow to the head; if the child obtains any cuts, bruises, or scratches; or if the nursing staff has to be contacted. If the child requires emergency transportation, the report will be available within 24 hours after the incident occurs.

Child Abuse Reporting

All staff members are mandated reporters of child abuse. If staff has any suspicion of child abuse or neglect, they **MUST** make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services. The safety of the children is always our first priority.

Custody Agreements

If there are custody issues involved with a child, parents/guardians are required to provide court documentation indicating who has permission to pick up the child. We cannot deny a parent access to their child without proper documentation.

Enrollment Policy

There will be times when Saco Pre-K cannot accommodate all eligible students who register or wish to attend. Given the expectations around class size and teacher:student ratios, we will be proactive in developing a high-quality program that will make every effort to serve our communities most vulnerable populations with a heterogenous mix of students. This refers

to children's developmental abilities and their families' economic status, culture and/or language needs, etc. Our enrollment policy mirrors district-wide demographic percentages within the walls of pre-k. For example, if the district-wide special education percentage is 15%, then we would reserve 15% of pre-k seats for students with identified disabilities. If the district-wide economically disadvantaged rate is 50%, then we would reserve 50% of pre-k seats for students who qualify. On occasion a student will present with a higher level of needs that cannot be supported in our program. In these instances we will help the family connect with a Child Development Services case manager to explore other placement options. Once all student seats are filled, we will then begin to waitlist students based upon needs.

Family Participation

Our program is a specialized program serving children with varying ranges of needs. It is understood that families will participate and attend meetings regarding their child's education. Additionally, families are permitted and encouraged to participate in the daily activities of our program. However, per Saco School Department policy, all volunteers must undergo a **district background check and a CPS background check**. It must be understood that children and family confidentiality is very important and staff will not discuss any other child in our program without the expressed written consent of that child's parent/guardian. Parents/guardians with work or school schedules that do not permit them to attend the program, but still wish to participate, may discuss this matter with your child's teacher. We strive to provide effective, timely and consistent communication to families. The teacher may supply your child with a take home packet of which pictures needed to be cut out for bulletin boards, papers to be stapled or a list of supplies for classroom donation. In addition, families may collaborate via online communication, written notes and phone calls. All forms of participation are welcomed and encouraged!

The teacher is available to discuss any questions a parent may have about their child or the program. However, for lengthy conversations, we would ask that a phone call or meeting be scheduled, as we want to provide you with our fullest attention and respect all children and families privacy during drop off and pick up times.

Guidance Policy

If parents have any questions or concerns at any time, it is recommended that they use this chain of command until an answer or solution is found:

1. Child's Teacher
2. Pre-K Director: J'Aime Walker
3. Superintendent: Jeremy Ray

Please feel free to bring up questions or concerns when they occur. Often, they can be addressed when they are a little problem, before they grow into bigger problems. Staff fully understand you are trusting us with your little ones and we want to foster a positive relationship, so we can partner with you in your child's growth and development.

Our program believes in the positive guidance approach when helping children correct their behavior. This method helps children to feel respected and empowered as we help them learn from their mistakes. This method helps children learn problem solving skills rather than punishing children for having problems they cannot solve. It is a developmentally appropriate practice implemented in the program through establishing routines and expectations understandable to young children. This method utilizes modeling and encouragement to produce expected behavior. Staff will provide redirection of poor behavior to an acceptable activity. Additionally, the program will provide clear limits to help children gain an understanding of appropriate behavior. The approach creates an encouraging environment where all children feel fully accepted and capable. It also facilitates an interactive learning environment, in which the adult functions as a responsive leader and the child engages in an ongoing process of constructing meaning through developmentally appropriate activities. Guidance helps the child's healthy development, socially, emotionally, and culturally in conjunction with cognitive development.

Hours and Days of Operation

Monday through Friday

Full Day	Abbreviated Wednesday
Full Day 8:00 AM - 2:15 PM Half Day AM 8:00 AM - 10:45 AM Half Day PM 11:30 AM - 2:15 PM	Full Day 8:00 AM - 1:15 PM Half Day AM 8:00 AM - 10:30 AM Half Day PM 10:45 AM - 1:15 PM

The program follows the Saco School Department school calendar. A calendar of additional school vacations will be provided. The abbreviated Wednesday schedule is a district wide initiative to provide teachers much needed professional development time for continuous educational improvement.

Hug, Kiss, Goodbye

To encourage a positive transition to the school setting, Saco Pre-K promotes a hug, kiss, goodbye procedure for separating from families and caregivers. Upon entering the program, the parent and/or caregiver is to give a quick

hug, kiss and then promptly say goodbye outside the front doors. We understand this is an emotional period for some families, but a quick positive goodbye helps students understand school is a safe and welcoming environment.

License

Due to the location of the Saco Pre-K program, outside of our K-12 facilities, it is licensed under the Department of Health and Human Services Division of Licensing and Regulatory Services Community Services Programs. As required by State Licensing Rules, staff are required to report licensing violations to the child care licensor for the Saco area. The Pre-K follows all provisions of the [10-148 CMC Chapter 32 Rules for Licensing of Child Care Programs](#).

Management of Illnesses

The program provides children with a clean, healthy environment to learn and grow. However, we recognize children become ill from time to time. If this is your child's first group care experience, it is possible they may experience more frequent illnesses at the beginning before their immune system becomes more active. We observe all children as they enter the program and to quickly assess general health. Please plan ahead and have a back-up care plan in place in the event that you are not able to take time away from work/school.

We ask that you keep your child home if they are sick to allow your child the time they need to recuperate and to minimize the spread of illness to other children. Our goal is to keep everyone as healthy as possible. The following are guidelines of when you should keep your child at home (this is not an all inclusive list):

<u>Symptom</u>	<u>Keep your child home if</u>
Fever	He/She has a morning temperature of 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, or if a temperature is below 100 but he/she is achy, pale, or tired. **Should be 24 hours fever free without medication before returning.
StomachAche	He/She has had two or more episodes of vomiting or diarrhea, or has had one in the past 24 hours and feels tired or ill. **Should be 24 hours without vomiting/diarrhea before returning.
Sneezing or runny nose	He/She is sneezing a lot, and his/her nose won't stop running.
Sore Throat	He/She has tender swollen glands and a fever of 99.5 or higher.

Cough	He/She coughs frequently, coughs up phlegm, or the cough sounds like a bark/whooping sound, or is accompanied by a sore throat or wheezing. **NO COUGH DROPS ALLOWED AT SCHOOL**
Ear Ache	His/Her pain is constant or severe- a sign of Otitis Media (ear infection)
Rash	The rash blisters, develops pus, or is uncomfortable, which can signal chickenpox or impetigo.
If symptoms persist more than 24 hours or worsen we encourage you to call your child's physician	
A child with any of the following symptoms will be sent home with the parent/guardian/ emergency contact: • Diarrhea (two abnormally loose stool incidents within a 24-hour period) • Difficult or rapid breathing • Yellowish skin or eyes • Redness of the eye or eyelid, thick and purulent (pus) discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching or eye pain • Unusually dark urine or grey or white stools • Stiff neck with an elevated temperature and or cold like symptoms	

Any child demonstrating signs of illness not listed above will be closely observed and the parents/guardians will be notified to determine further action.

Parents will be notified via email if children have been exposed to any communicable diseases. Children will be readmitted to the program after at least 24 hours with no symptoms. If they are not symptom free, a doctor's note should be provided stating the child is not contagious.

In the event that a child has lice or nits, parents/guardians will be notified. We encouraged students to be treated for lice. Lice are not a significant health hazard to your child or other children. If you are concerned about lice, the program or nurse can provide literature to help with treatment and/or bring understanding as to why it is no longer common practice to exclude children who have lice.

Medications

Should your child need medication while at school, please contact the school nurse and they will be happy to assist you with this process. Please do not send medications to school with your child. Children are not allowed to carry any medications (prescription or over the counter) at school without physician, school nurse, and/or parent authorization.

Food allergies are a growing food safety and public health concern that can impact children. If your child has a food allergy, please let your child's teacher and school nurse know. The nurse will discuss the medication policy and procedure if your child was given life saving medications to manage his or her food allergies. If your child needs special accommodations, please let your child's teacher and school nurse know.

Outdoor Play

Research has shown there are numerous health and education benefits when children have daily outdoor experiences. It is also a state licensure requirement that we offer outdoor play daily weather permitting. We will limit the amount of time children spend outside if temperatures are very warm or very cold. Children will not be taken outside when the temperature (wind chill and heat index factored in) is below 20 degrees or above 90 degrees. If the situation requires we will also adjust outdoor time due to rain, threatening weather, etc. On days that outdoor activities are not available we will be providing extra gross motor play indoors including obstacle courses, active games such as Simon-says and extended music and movement. Because we do try to go outside whenever possible we ask that parents please supply weather appropriate clothes. We understand the weather can fluctuate greatly so layered options are greatly valued. During winter it is important parents bring ski pants, winter jackets, hats, boots, and mittens, everyday so children are comfortable outside.

Extra clothes

Because children at this age are so active it is essential parents and guardians bring a change of clothes. We will not deter children from essential learning opportunities due to the prospect of becoming messy. Thus, children will have access to water play, sand play, outdoor experiences including playing in puddles, and with mud. We also do a multitude of art projects and other educational and sensory activities. We would ask that you keep this in mind when dressing your child for our program. Additionally, accidents do happen so when supplying a change of clothes please bring an extra shirt, undershirt, underwear, pants, socks and even shoes. If your child wears Crocs™ or flip flops, we would ask that you also supply sneakers or boots for outdoor play as crotch and flip flops can be less conducive to the outdoor environment. If your child wears a dress to the program, we would ask that they also wear shorts or pants underneath. This is because even young girls love to tumble, jump, and crawl in ways that may not allow a dress to cover their bodies appropriately. Finally, we would remind parents and guardians that the Saco School Department is not responsible for any clothing damaged while your child attends our program and we will not exclude children from activities due to the clothes they are wearing. If your child needs to be dressed nicely for an event we will gladly have children changed prior to pick up if you send their nice clothes in a separate bag.

Saco School Nutrition Program

The Saco School Nutrition Program participates in the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, preparing and serving children in grades PreK through 8 healthful, appealing meals to support their growth, health and learning. Menus meet strict USDA federal nutrition standards for school meals, ensuring that meals are healthful, well-balanced and provide students the nutrition they need to grow and succeed at school. Pre-K menus provide age-appropriate calorie limits, skim and lowfat white milk, whole grains, and fresh fruits and vegetables, and utilize scratch cooking methods incorporating local foods to the greatest extent possible.

Breakfast and lunch will be offered to Pre-K students through a mobile meal cart that will be in the hallway and stop at each classroom, offering meals to children who are choosing to purchase school breakfast or lunch that day. School Nutrition staff will serve breakfast/snack and lunch to students, and will mark on students' school meals account when a breakfast or lunch is purchased. There is no cost for meals served to children approved for free or reduced price meals. All children, whether purchasing school meals or bringing in breakfast/snack or lunch from home, will eat their breakfast/snack, and their lunch in their classroom during meal times.

Application for Free or Reduced Price School Meals

If you feel your child(ren) may qualify for free or reduced price school meals, please complete an application! Receiving free school meals helps reduce food costs, saving families about \$150 per month per child!! (There is also no cost for reduced price meals). Approval may also provide discounts on school laptop insurance and Spectrum services for your household, and helps your school receive more programs and funding.

Complete a Free & Reduced Meals application privately online at www.MySchoolApps.com or complete a paper application available at any school and send back to school (fill out only one application per family, listing ALL your children's names on just one application). Completing this application also informs federal funding for schools.

Charging Policy

It is standard practice for the Saco School Nutrition Program to collect money for school meals either in advance (preferred) or at the time of purchase. **The school meals account is a DEBIT account, and there MUST be money in your child's account so he/she can purchase meals. Charging should NOT occur, and it is parents' responsibility to ensure your child has money in their account so that he/she can purchase meals or milk.** Most parents find it helpful to sign up at www.MySchoolBucks.com and receive email reminders that will inform them when it's time to add more funds to the account and

even sign up for automatic payments to the account. There are times however, that a student comes to school hungry and has no money either on his/her account or in their possession to pay for the meal. We understand that these occurrences may not be intentional and make every attempt to handle the situation in the most professional and courteous way possible. The administrative practice for handling these situations is as follows:

School Meals- Lunch & Breakfast

Our charging policy is as follows: a school nutrition employee will attempt to notify the parent(s) and request payment through telephone or email. This procedure allows students to eat a meal while his/her family either makes a timely payment or arranges for breakfasts or lunches provided from home.

Payment for School Meals

ALL children are automatically assigned a school meals account number, which is also their Powerschool number, and follows them, along with account balances, from Pre-K through grade 8.

At www.MySchoolBucks.com, parents can sign up for email reminders of low account balances, pay online (\$2.49 transaction fee), view purchases and payments, and sign up for automatic payments to your child's account. Like your bank debit account, **MONEY MUST BE IN YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL MEALS ACCOUNT BEFORE YOUR CHILD CAN PURCHASE BREAKFAST, LUNCH OR MILK.** When sending in payment by check or cash, please write your child's name or ID number on the check or envelope and make checks payable to Saco School Nutrition Program. If checks are returned to us for insufficient funds, a \$30 fee will be deducted from your child's account.

QUESTIONS about your child's account balance, purchases or payments: please view online at www.MySchoolBucks.com, or call or email the Kitchen Manager Kelly Rider , 282-1322 or email krider@sacoschools.org. For questions re: free and reduced applications or eligibility, contact Sue Morrell, Director of School Nutrition at (207)282-0211 or email smorrell@sacoschools.org.

Menus

Breakfast and Lunch menus for all schools will be available at www.sacoschools.org under School Nutrition Program, and in the school's main office.

Toileting Routine

Children will be encouraged to use the bathroom frequently throughout the day. They will be offered time(s) to go upon arrival, before and after meals and snacks, before and after rest times transitions to specials, and before and after outside time. This means bathroom breaks will occur roughly every hour. Toileting routines will fluctuate depending on the needs of the child. Staff will

strive for independence during the toileting routine. They will assist children only when necessary. It is important you work with your child(ren) to obtain independent bathroom skills. Additionally, any individual toilet routine for children will be determined by the teacher and the child's parent/guardian.

Transportation Policy - Arrival/Departure

Buses will drive into the front circle of Pre-K and load/unload students with staff members present. Bus aid will buckle/unbuckle students on the bus.

For drop off and pick-ups by any adult who is not the child's legal guardian, staff will require this individual to provide picture identification and then verify this identification with the child's release form. Children's safety is our primary concern and we will not release the child to anyone who is not permitted on the child's release form. In cases of emergency, families must notify staff by phone or written correspondence to permit the child to leave with an adult not listed on the student's release form. Additionally, staff will not release children to anyone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Emergency contacts will be called to transport the child home and police will be notified if necessary.

Absences

If a child will not be attending for any reason we ask that parents or guardians please call us to notify us of the child's absence by 9:00 AM. Our main number is 494-9630. If the child is scheduled to attend the program and is not here an hour after they are scheduled, staff will contact the parent or guardian.

There are many reasons that may require students to be absent from schools from time to time. Absences can be a challenge for students and teachers alike. Planning ahead can help teachers prepare work in the event that your child can complete assignments during their absence.

Bus Pick-Up Protocol

To ensure prompt and safe arrival of all children transported by our school bus, families must have students ready for the bus ten minutes prior to designated pick up time. Families are to hug and kiss goodbye, prior to bus arrival at the bus stop. Families must walk their child to the bus doors and allow bus personnel to then escort the child to his/her seat and secure them. In the interest of effective and safe transportation protocols families are not to board the bus with their child. Students arriving by bus will be dropped off and escorted to their classroom by an on duty staff member.

Bus Drop-Off Protocol

Due to the age of children in the program a parent or guardian must be present and visible for the bus driver to release the child from the bus. If no parent or guardian is visible, the bus driver will contact the transportation to contact the child's family and emergency contact person. This process does take time and will delay the drop offs of all subsequent children, so please ensure a family or guardian is visible. The bus driver is not allowed to release the child into the care of an unknown individual. If for any reason a new adult is to retrieve the child from the bus please call the Transportation Supervisor Jeanne Anderson at 494-9631.

Rights of Children and Parents

Rights of Children. Children receiving Child care from Child Care Facilities have the following rights.

1. Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
2. Each Child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the Child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the Child.
3. Each Child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards in this rule.
4. Each Child must be provided Child care services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition.
5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the Child Care Facility.
6. Each Child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that Child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the Child Care Facility.
7. Each Child has the right to Developmentally Appropriate activities, materials, and equipment.
8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to Child Care Facility policies and practices.

Rights of parents and legal guardians of Children receiving Child care from Child Care Facilities.

1. A Child's Parent or Legal Guardian must be fully informed of items or services which are included in the rate they pay for Child care services.
2. A Child's Parent or Legal Guardian has the right to be fully informed of findings of the most recent inspection conducted by the Department. The Child Care Facility must inform Children's Parents or Legal Guardians that the licensing inspection results are public information and inspection results must be posted in a prominent place on the Premises.
3. Parents or Legal Guardians must be notified by the Child Care Facility within two business days of any actions taken against the Child Care Facility by the Department, including but not limited to, decisions to issue conditional Licenses, refusal to renew a License, or to impose fines or other sanctions.

School Delays/Cancellations

Our program follows the Saco School Department cancellations for weather and delays. If for any reason parents or guardians feel the weather conditions are not safe enough for travel to the program, we ask that you please call and inform us of your child's absence. If your child is attending any of the Saco Community Center programs, please understand our automated text-messaging cancellation system DOES NOT apply to these programs.

(PLEASE PRINT)

Today's Date

I, _____, parent/guardian of
Pre-K student _____, have
read this Parent Handbook - as required for the Pre-K's licensing and will keep
the information handy should I have any questions about programming this
year.

Parent/Guardian Signature