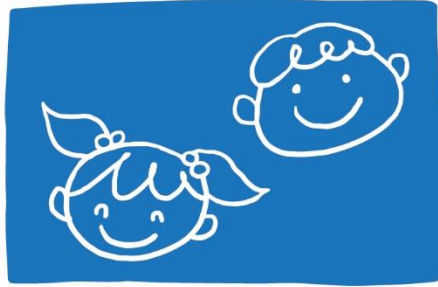




# Building Blocks Preschool Programs



City of San Mateo Parks & Recreation Department

## 2025-2026 Parent Handbook

Building Blocks Preschool Programs – City of San Mateo



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# Section 1

## Welcome

Welcome to our Building Blocks Preschool Program! Thank you for choosing our program to support your child's early childhood development. Our Building Blocks Preschool Program provides a safe environment for each child to grow emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually. Our caring and dedicated Building Blocks teachers have extensive backgrounds in Early Childhood Education and are dedicated to creating lifelong learners.

Our preschool provides thoughtfully planned experiences and opportunities, which stimulate learning in all areas of development. We provide a balanced program that includes choice and structured activities, whole group, small group, and individual activities, as well as teacher and child-directed experiences. Our classroom environments are designed to encourage exploration and interaction with other children, teachers, and learning materials.

In this handbook you will find the necessary information and forms pertaining to our preschool policies and procedures. Please take time to review this information and if you have any questions, please reach out to our Sr. Program Assistant, Coordinator or Program Supervisor. We are very excited to have your family be a part of our preschool programs and are looking forward to a year full of fun and learning

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

### PHILOSOPHY

Our Building Blocks programs are play-based, which embrace the theory that children learn through play. Our teachers make a commitment to support families and children by following Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP). Briefly, DAP can be defined as those practices which are both **age appropriate** and **individually appropriate** for each child. It is important to understand that DAP is a **philosophy**, not a method. In our programs, each child is recognized and respected as an individual, and each is nurtured and cherished. Our teachers embrace your child's strengths while helping them build self-confidence and self-esteem.

Teachers view themselves as facilitators. Teachers prepare the environment, offer age-appropriate materials, and provide guidance so that children can explore their surroundings and make discoveries on their own. We do not believe in imposing academic pressure. By following Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), teachers can foster creative, positive, and self-fulfilling attitudes, rather than creating anxiety or resistance toward school. Our hope is that your child will leave our programs feeling accomplished and ready to move on to the next level of learning.

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood."  
- Fred Rogers

## PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Playing is learning for preschoolers. Play is how they explore the world around them and how they learn to live in it. Did you know that children can use play to develop early reading, writing, and math skills? Our Building Blocks Preschool Program is a play-based program designed to focus on the five main milestones of development which occur at the preschool level:

- |             |                        |
|-------------|------------------------|
| ❖ Social    | ❖ Sensory/Motor        |
| ❖ Emotional | ❖ Self-Regulation/Life |
| ❖ Cognitive | Skills                 |

We provide opportunities for children to participate in activities based on planned themes *and* the observable interests of the children. Our curriculum is incorporated through play, art, music, multicultural experiences, movement, using practical life skills, number sense, science exploration and sensory exploration. Children are encouraged to use their own creativity in their work. Although planned and prepared by teachers, the curriculum becomes child-directed rather than teacher-directed by allowing for creative expression and imagination.

### **A NOTE ABOUT ART**

Our preschool programs focus on process art. Through process art, your child will use their imagination to create masterpieces of their own. Teachers provide the materials and allow them to explore with little direction. With this, your child is learning how to problem solve, communicate, and to work independently.

### **EXPLORERS PROGRAM - DIAPERING & TOILET TRAINING**

We do **NOT** require your child to be toilet trained during this class. We support diapering and also encourage your child to feel proud and competent in using the toilet and becoming more independent. Each day your child will bring with them to school a bag labeled with their name, a full change of clothes, and a supply of fresh clean diapers and wipes (provided by parents). Diapering will be provided by staff on an as needed basis. **A fee of \$5.00 (includes diapers and wipes) per diapering will be assessed if your child needs to be diapered and they have no supplies.**

### **TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN READINESS EVALUATION**

In the Discoverers program, it is our goal to expose our students to healthy social experiences while teaching them the necessary skills to help prepare them for a successful future in school. The Building Blocks Discoverers students will be evaluated during the school year. These evaluations will provide feedback on skills attained and skills needed to ensure TK readiness. The City of San Mateo will use an assessment form adapted from the Desired Results Developmental Profile – Preschool (DRDP-PS) model produced by California Department of Education. The outline is as follows below:

#### **Transitional Kindergarten Assessment Outline**

- Evaluation and observation process will begin during the fall.
- Lead Teachers will collect information on each participant.
- The evaluation will be completed in January
- Evaluations will be done through observations made in and out of the classroom.
- Parents will receive a copy of the results after the evaluation period.
- Teachers will keep the original copy for two years.
- Conferences will be scheduled upon request.

## RATIOS

The number of adults who are present to teach and care for your child and the other children in a group is known as the child-to-adult ratio. Low child-to-adult ratios and small group sizes help ensure that your child gets enough one-on-one attention from an adult who is available to take care of each child's unique needs. This responsive caregiving is extremely important to your child's social and emotional development, physical well-being, and overall learning.

Our programs are designed around the following teacher to student ratios to ensure the success of each child in our care.

**Explorers:** 1:4

**Discoverers and Stay & Play** 1:8

## Section 2

### BUILDING BLOCKS CALENDAR 2025-2026

| Important Dates          |                      |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| August 18                | First Day of Classes |                            |
| September 1              | No School            | Labor Day                  |
| September 26             | No School            | Staff Development          |
| September 26 – October 3 | No School            | Fall Break                 |
| November 11              | No School            | Veteran's Day              |
| November 24 - 28         | No School            | Thanksgiving Break         |
| December 18 - January 5  | No School            | Winter Break               |
| January 5                | No School            | Staff Development          |
| January 16               | No School            | Staff Development          |
| January 19               | No School            | Martin Luther King Jr. Day |
| February 16              | No School            | President's Day            |
| March 27                 | No School            | Staff Development          |
| March 31– April 6        | No School            | Spring Break               |
| May 25                   | No School            | Memorial Day               |
| June 3                   | Last Day of Classes  |                            |

## 2025-2026 TUITION SCHEDULE

### Building Blocks Explorers – Age 2-3 years

Activity Number Annual Fee 10 Installments

#### Beresford Recreation Center

|           |     |                |                |        |       |
|-----------|-----|----------------|----------------|--------|-------|
| 610112-B1 | MWF | 8/18/25-6/3/26 | 9:00 - 11:30am | \$3500 | \$350 |
| 610112-B3 | TTh | 8/19/25-6/2/26 | 9:00 - 11:30am | \$2500 | \$250 |

#### Shoreview Recreation Center

|           |     |                |              |        |       |
|-----------|-----|----------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| 610112-B5 | MWF | 8/18/25-6/3/26 | 9:00-11:30am | \$3500 | \$350 |
| 610112-B7 | TTh | 8/19/25-6/2/26 | 9:00-11:30am | \$2500 | \$250 |

### Building Blocks Discovers – Age 3-5 years

Activity Number Annual Fee 10 Installments

#### Shoreview Recreation Center

|           |     |                |              |        |       |
|-----------|-----|----------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| 610113-C1 | MWF | 8/18/25-6/3/26 | 8:30-12:30pm | \$5600 | \$560 |
| 610113-C2 | TTh | 8/19/25-6/2/26 | 8:30-12:30pm | \$4000 | \$400 |

## TUITION INFORMATION

### INSTALLMENT PLAN

- The first payment is due August 15th, 2025
- All additional payments are due on the 15<sup>th</sup> calendar day of each month (September 2025-May 2026)
- Payments received after the 20<sup>th</sup> calendar day of each month will be charged a **\$25 late payment** fee per child and per class registered.
- If your payment is not received on or before the 28<sup>th</sup> calendar day of each month, your child will be withdrawn from the registered program(s).
- **You may choose to pay your annual tuition in full or elect to pay in TEN installments.**

### WITHDRAWALS

#### The reasons for early dismissal can be:

- **Behavior:** If a child is behaving in a manner that affects the behavior, safety and enjoyment of other children in the program, and conferences with parents/child/and Lead Teacher have not resulted in a noticeable change in behavior, the Lead Teacher may dismiss the child from the program at their discretion.
- **Non-Payment:** All payments are due on the 15<sup>th</sup> calendar day of each month (August 2025-May 2026) Payments received after the 20<sup>th</sup> calendar day of each month will be charged a **\$25 late payment** fee per child and per class registered. If your payment is not received on or before the 28<sup>th</sup> calendar day of each month, your child will be withdrawn from the registered program(s).
- **Guardians Choice:** All Withdrawals must be submitted in writing to the Sr.Program Assistant Jessica Lira, at [jlira@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:jlira@cityofsanmateo.org) by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month; email is an acceptable format.
  - Withdrawals are effective on the 15th of the month if you have made your request by the 5<sup>th</sup>, otherwise it will be effective at the end of the following month.
  - If you are paying in installments, this is a reminder that there are **NO REFUNDS** once a payment has been made.
  - If you have paid your annual tuition in full, you will receive a partial refund based on your withdrawal and final attendance date. **\*\*We do not accept any withdrawal requests after April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

#### Installment Withdrawal EXAMPLE:

If you have made a payment on September 15<sup>th</sup> and you decide to remove your child from the program on September 30<sup>th</sup>, you will not receive a refund for your Wednesday, September 15<sup>th</sup> payment. Your child will be eligible to attend the program until October 15<sup>th</sup>. In this scenario, you will NOT be required to make a Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup> payment, which would apply to November attendance.

### **Additional Fees:**

A **\$60.00** registration processing fee is due at the time of registration. This fee is non-transferable and non-refundable. The annual costs reflect all school days without holidays, vacation days, and teacher workdays.

### **Mid-Year Enrollment:**

- Mid-year enrollment is based on space availability. Your child may start on the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.
  - If your child begins the program on the 1<sup>st</sup>, the current month's installment is due at the time of registration, plus the \$60.00 registration fee. The next payment will be due the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month.
  - If your child begins the program on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, 50% of the current month is due at registration, plus the \$60.00 registration fee as well as the next full installment.
- Financial assistance is available to City of San Mateo residents – please contact any of our recreation centers to obtain an application and information on enrollment eligibility.
- Your installment payments may be paid on-line at [www.sanmateorec.org](http://www.sanmateorec.org), automatically through our auto-credit card billing program, by EFT (Electronic Check), by mail or in person at Beresford or King Center. Payments are not accepted by the teachers or in your child's classroom.
- **Note\*** Your credit card may be subject to a 3.25% fee for payment- please check with your bank for more information

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

### **Section 3**

### **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

- Please be on time when dropping off. Late arrivals make it difficult for the child and the whole class to transition.
- Please be on time when picking up. Parents will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute – there is no grace period for late pick-ups.
- If you are late more than four (4) times in a calendar month or six (6) in consecutive months, you will be notified that your child may be dismissed from the program.
- If you are more than thirty (30) minutes late, we will need to notify Children's Protective Services or the San Mateo Police Department.
- Please socialize with other parents outside of the classroom to ease the transition for the children and minimize disruption.
- Please sign your child in and out each day they attend program.

### **If you are going to be late**

- Please call, text or email if you can and leave a message.
- After 5 minutes with no contact from you, we will contact your emergency contact(s).
- After 30 minutes with no contact, we will contact Children's Protective Services or the San Mateo Police Department.

### **For your child's protection, anyone who picks up your child must be:**

- 18 years or older.
- Have a valid ID on hand.
- Listed on your emergency contact form (epact).
- Please update your form online ahead of time as it must be done online (epact).

## **CLASSROOM BASICS**

### **TOYS AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

- Should remain at home, unless they are for a show and tell day.
- Must never be violent or encourage aggressive play (e.g. guns, swords, knives etc.).
- Must be Labeled.
- Please be aware that toys may be lost or damaged at school.

#### **CLOTHING**

- Should be appropriate, comfortable and easy to launder.
- Closed toe shoes are recommended.
- Label all sweaters and jackets with your child's name.
- Please remember that messy clothes are a sign that your child had a good day at preschool.
- Please send a change of clothes with your child to school daily.

#### **VACATION AND ABSENCES**

- In the case of an extended absence please notify your child teachers.
- There are no refunds or make-up classes for missed classes.
- Tuition must be kept current to maintain your spot.

## **SNACKS AND CELEBRATIONS**

#### **SNACK**

- A list of possible snacks will be posted on a monthly snack calendar
- If your child has a food allergy or food aversion, please let the staff know and list this on your ePACT emergency form
- Our snacks will be both low in sugar and salt content as well as nut free.
- Snack, consisting of one serving from two different food groups will be provided daily

#### **BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

We love celebrating with our students! If you decide to bring a treat or goody bag to share, please let the teachers know ahead of time and to ensure your food item can be eaten by all students.

#### **HOLIDAY/CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS**

We will have many classroom celebrations during the year and parents will be invited to attend. Occasionally, we will allow modest amounts of sugar to be served at these celebrations.

| <b>We can accept</b>     | <b>We Cannot Accept</b>       |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Muffins (no nuts)        | Cupcakes/Cakes                |
| Homemade reads (no nuts) | Cookies/Brownies              |
| 100% Juice Bars          | Candy/Frosted Items           |
| Popcorn                  | Ice Cream/Fast-food           |
| Pizza                    | Artificially Sweetened Juices |
| 100% Fruit Juice         | Anything Containing Nuts      |

## **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS**

**Circle Time** - Circle time is offered daily. This is a special time for teachers and children to connect with each other and grow the student-teacher bond. During this time, we sing songs, have conversations, listen to stories, review concepts, and learn how to sit and interact in a group setting. Circle time is a carefully planned time in which children can develop a wide range of skills and attitudes such as confidence, self-esteem, improving emotional intelligence, a sense of responsibility, speaking and listening skills, friendship building, and understanding of how their behavior affects others.



**Learning Centers** - Learning centers are typically designated areas within the classroom that provide students with exciting and interesting experiences to practice, enrich, re-teach, and to enhance learning. These centers are filled with manipulatives, art materials, books and other instructional tools. When children play in centers, they develop social skills, self-awareness skills, personal interests, and language and writing development. Teachers use learning centers as a period to interact spontaneously with children and take advantage of opportunities to enhance, extend, and process information. Centers you will typically see in our Building Blocks classrooms are below:

- **Dramatic Play** - The dramatic play area is a favorite among children. Dramatic Play is a type of play where children assign and accept roles and act them out. It is pretending to be someone or something else. Sometimes children take on real roles, other times they take on fantasy roles. Children learn many things through trial and error, and what better and safer way to try out various scenarios and situations than through pretending you are in them. Pretend play helps children understand the power of language when children engage in pretend (or dramatic play) they actively experiment with the social and emotional roles of life. Through cooperative play, they learn how to take turns, share responsibility and creatively solve problems. The opportunities for developing creativity, imagination, and oral language skills in the dramatic play center are endless
- **Blocks** - Block play helps children develop motor skills and learn about basic concepts of architecture and engineering. Block play also helps children learn to work with others and gives them creative design opportunities. The block center boosts spatial reasoning, develops fine motor skills, and explores concepts of math, geometry, problem solving, and cause and effect.
- **The library** - Excellent reading habits begin in the early years. Introducing children to literature in preschool supports kindergarten readiness, promotes early literacy and supports a love of language and reading. A preschool library corner is a distinct area of the classroom with a variety of board books, picture books, early readers and comfortable seating. Libraries promote critical thinking skills and enhance creative and social development.
- **Arts and Crafts** - In Building Blocks, children are invited daily to participate in both project-based art as well as process art. In project-based art, children practice following directions, using listening skills and creating an end product. In process art we focus on the method behind the creation and allow children to explore art in an open ended, unstructured way. Children are naturally drawn to art as it is a form of expression as they explore materials and uncover possibilities.
- **Math and Manipulatives** - Manipulatives, sometimes referred to as table toys, are an important part of the early childhood curriculum. Children use manipulatives to practice fine motor skills, eye and hand coordination, visual discrimination, and recognition of shapes, colors, and textures. Fine motor skills used when working with manipulatives build muscles in the children's hands that will be used for writing.
- **Sensory Center** - Sensory play is a type of play that activates and stimulates a child's senses. Often, sensory play focuses on stimulating touch, sight, and hearing, as those senses are most accessible. As children grow, they begin to play and, through play learn more about the world around them. Some sensory items we may use are, sand, water, rice, shredded paper, instant snow, beans and other similar materials. These materials can be played with and manipulated in many ways for different results and exploration.

**Outdoor Play** - Each day the children will have the opportunity to play outdoors. Children who play outdoors improve their motor skills, body mass index, overall health and muscle strength. Outdoor play enables children to "recharge their batteries," to reinvigorate themselves by engaging in very different activity from their classroom experience. Playing outdoors fosters both self-confidence and a sense of independence. Children will play outdoors every day unless severe weather prevents us from doing so.

**Snack** - Snack time is a time when we see the children at their most authentic and relaxed. They get to choose where to sit and with whom and it's magical. Friendships develop over apple slices and goldfish crackers. Food interests are started when friends are enjoying something another child has never tried. Snack is an unstructured time that allows for natural conversations between children and adults. It creates a sense of community. Snack begins with hand washing, finding somewhere to sit and ends with the children cleaning up after themselves and washing their hands before moving on to the next activity.

## BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

"In my world there are NO BAD KIDS. Just impressionable, conflicted young people wrestling with emotions & impulses trying to communicate their feelings & needs the only way they know how."

- Janet Lansbury

The City of San

positive approach to discipline. All classrooms use positive redirection, which is redirecting inappropriate behavior to an appropriate alternative. We praise children for their appropriate behavior by describing what we see and how we feel, for example: "I see that you have picked up all of the blocks and put them back on the shelf. It's nice to have such a clean room." We encourage children's appropriate behavior by giving them positive verbal rewards. This reinforces a child's confidence and serves as an example to others to act in such a way as to receive this praise.

Mateo uses a

When inappropriate behavior arises, we believe it is important for teachers to be the facilitators in the problem-solving effort rather than dictate what the solutions should be. Teachers ask questions to encourage problem solving, and help children identify their needs, feelings, causes, alternatives and choices.

When a child is not making appropriate choices in a group situation, the child is seated by a teacher and given examples of positive behavior that is considered appropriate, allowing the child to make a positive choice. In a less structured situation, the following steps will be implemented:

1. Verbal reminder that the behavior is inappropriate and given an acceptable alternative.
2. The child is re-directed away from the group or objects that are part of the distraction and led toward a constructive activity in order to reduce conflict. The child will choose where they would like to work.
3. If the behavior continues, the child will lose that choice and the teacher will have to make the choice for the child.

We do not use the term "time out" in our program. Instead have the child "take a break" from whatever activity or situation may be causing the issue. The break will not exceed the child's age in minutes. (3 years old; no longer than a 3-minute break).

There are certain behaviors that are part of normal growth and development, but are not necessarily considered appropriate. Children resort to these behaviors when they are unsure of how to resolve conflicts, how to enter play, or various other developmental social skills. If a child has an ongoing problem with hitting, endangering staff or putting himself or herself in harm's way, the following steps will be taken.

1. The teacher and program supervisor will meet with the family and a behavior plan will be discussed.
2. If the behavior happens again after the behavior plan has been put into place, parents will be required to pick up the child.
3. In a third instance, another conference will be set up with the teacher and program supervisor to continue the discussion to understand what might be causing the problem. The City of San Mateo reserves the right to dismiss any child from program if further incident occurs, or we feel that any of the following conditions exist:
  - The program cannot meet the child's needs.
  - The parents are not able to work with the City of San Mateo to find an acceptable solution.
  - The continuing behavior endangers the wellbeing of other children, and/or the child engaging in the behavior.

### **BITING**

Biting may happen in a preschool setting for a number of reasons. The child may be teething, frustrated and is unable to express that frustration and/or difficulty using their words. Regardless of the likely cause, it is important that adults show strong disapproval through words to the child doing the biting. When a child bites, the teachers will firmly say “We DO NOT bite.” The teacher will give medical attention if needed to the child who was bitten. Both parents will be notified of the incident. The child that inflicted the bite will take a break from the activity and talk to the teacher about the issue. If the biting continues the following steps will be taken:

1. If a child inflicts a second bite in the same day, parents will be notified to pick up the child.
2. If a child inflicts 3 bites in a one-week period (5 class days) in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken, bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, a conference will be held with the staff and parents to discuss the child’s behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
3. If the child again inflicts another bite on another child or staff member the child will be suspended for 2 program days.
4. If the child once again inflicts another bite the parents will be asked to make other program arrangements.

At school, we promote using kind behavior and work on skills to ensure that we provide a safe and fun learning environment inside and outside the classroom.

The Building Blocks program finds it important that parents and teachers continuously work together creating a partnership. Parents play the most important role in a child’s life. Positive reinforcement must be consistent between home and school to ensure that the children are successful in using their problem-solving skills

## ILLNESS POLICY

Our Health Check & Illness Policy applies to all staff, children and their household members. For your child’s comfort, and to reduce the risk of contagion, children must be picked up within 1 hour of notification of illness. Until then, your child will be kept comfortable and will continue to be observed for symptoms.

Throughout the school year, it is expected that colds and minor illnesses will occur. To protect the health of students and teachers, we ask the following health guidelines to be observed.

Children with the following symptoms **MUST** be kept at home:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Fever of 100.4° or above | Cough   |
| Sore Throat              | Congestion/Runny Nose                                   |
| Muscle Aches             | Rash from unknown source                                |
| Difficulty Breathing     | Diarrhea/Vomiting                                       |
| Loss of taste or smell   | Other Contagious disease (head lice, chicken pox, etc.) |

### **MEDICATIONS**

We do not administer any “over the counter” medications at any time. If your child has a prescribed medication that must be administered during our 2-3-hour classes, please speak to your lead teacher about your personal circumstance. We will ask that you fill out the appropriate paperwork.

### **FIRST AID AT SCHOOL**

When a child receives a minor injury at school, appropriate first aid will be given. Please be aware that teachers are not permitted to use any medications or ointments to treat a child. If the injury is serious, parents will be notified immediately. In worst case scenario, 9-1-1 will be called first.

### **CONTAGIOUS DISEASES**

If your child contracts a contagious disease, please notify your teacher immediately. It is the teachers’ responsibility to post exposure notices to help prevent outbreaks.

We understand that children's illnesses may be inconvenient and frustrating, but we ask for your cooperation in following the above guidelines. We want to keep our children and families as healthy as possible throughout the school year. Thank you in advance for your help.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

"At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents."  
-Jane D. Hull

### **FIELD TRIPS**

If your child is registered for the Explorers or Discovers program, your child's class will be occasionally taking field trips to local areas of interest. Siblings may not be able to attend some trips depending on the location. Teachers will notify you beforehand. **One parent/adult chaperone must attend for each participant.** If the parent is unable to attend a field trip, it is the parent's responsibility to arrange alternative transportation and supervision.

### **GIFT GIVING**

Gifts are never expected nor anticipated, however families wishing to express appreciation to their teachers are welcome to donate or purchase gifts that can be used in the classrooms. **Teachers are unable to accept personal gifts.** If a teacher receives a gift that cannot be used for the classroom, it will be taken to a chosen charity for a donation. Each program has its own wish list; please check with your teacher for more information.

# Building Blocks Parent/Guardian Information Packet Acknowledgment Form

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Center: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the parent of \_\_\_\_\_ have read and

*Parent/ Legal Guardian First and Last Name*

*Child's First and Last Name*

understand the Parent Information Packet and agree to abide by the policies and procedures.

- I am aware that I must complete an online Emergency Form (ePACT) and Physician's Report **PRIOR** to the first day of Program.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign and return this form.**