

Christina Early Education Center (CEEC)

620 East Chestnut Hill Road

Newark, Delaware 19713

302-454-2720

302-454-2010 (fax)



Parent Handbook

2024-2025

| Administration and Staff | |
|---|--|
| Principal | Dolores “DeeJay” Kingery |
| Assistant Principal | Jamee Catalano |
| Administrative Secretary | Karen Ewing |
| Program Assistant | Judith Padgett |
| Bilingual Family Service Worker | Adilia Diaz |
| Nurse | Theresa Inerfield |
| Special Education Coordinators | Alicia Fencer Anne Hohler Frances “Lynn” Izzo Melissa Tabor |
| State Funded Early Childcare Education Program Coordinator | Karen Vietri |
| School Psychologist | Hannah Ellsworth |
| Occupational Therapists | Jennifer Dragone Elizabeth Jones Katherine Kostuk Anna Reed Stephanie Vantrease (Itinerant) |
| Physical Therapists | Jill Burke Mary Jane Gallagher Ashley Mariano Monique Myers Tracy Stoner (Itinerant) |
| Speech and Language Pathologists | Kristin Allison (Itinerant) Suhu Chaudry Sarah Davis Jodi DeFlaviis Annie Doordan Katie Husbands Laura Matista Kristina Leuzzi (Itinerant) Alexa Pond Kelly Sanderson Jill Widdoes Jen Williams (Itinerant) Monica Winslow (Itinerant) |

Program Philosophy/Shared Vision

CEEC provides EVERY early learner and his or her family with the foundation, environment, and support needed to thrive for a future of successful, life-long learning and growth.

Mission Statement

Through strong school, family, and community partnerships, we work together to create rich, positive, and developmentally appropriate (play-based) environments where all students engage in developing foundational skills and an early love of learning.

We celebrate diversity, providing inclusive opportunities for all students to challenge and promote the development of academic, social-emotional, cognitive, and communication skills of students at every level of ability.

CEEC promotes excellence in teaching, focusing on evidence based practices and professional development to enhance the quality and strategies utilized throughout the program. Through best practices, it is our belief that we can better prepare our early learners for transition to kindergarten and future learning opportunities.

Inclusion

The Christina Early Education Center has adopted the Joint Position Statement of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) on Inclusion as a fundamental right for all our children. For our program this means that children with and without disabilities play and learn together in their early childhood classrooms. The definition of Early Childhood Inclusion:

*“Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are **access, participation and supports.**” (DEC/NAEYC, 2009)*

What is meant by access, participation and supports?

- **Access**—means providing a wide range of activities and environments for every child by removing physical barriers and offering multiple ways to promote learning and development.
- **Participation**—means using a range of instructional approaches to promote engagement in play and learning activities, and a sense of belonging for every child.
- **Supports**—refers to broader aspects of the system such as professional development, incentives for inclusion and opportunities for communication and collaboration among families and professionals to assure high quality inclusion.

Parent and Program Responsibilities

The Christina Early Education Center (CEEC) is dedicated to providing positive educational experiences to children and their families. Within the program, we focus on positive child and family outcomes where we build a better future for children, families, and communities served by the program. To reach this goal, we work with families to ensure that every child is ready to be successful in Kindergarten and beyond.

Families are responsible to:

- Ensure that your child attends school on time and every day because attendance is key to success.
- Read with your child every night to encourage a love of reading and to build vocabulary.
- Participate in parent meetings, orientation, workshops, events, and activities at the Christina Early Education Center and/or your child's school.
- Ensure that the program has access to up-to-date Emergency Contact Information
- Ensure that your child is up-to-date on all required medical and dental needs.

The Christina Early Education Center will do the following for you and your child:

- Provide an excellent educational program—every day—for all students
- Work with you to set goals that support your child's education at home
- Help identify your strengths and skills and work with you to reach your own goals.
- Offer multiple opportunities for you to participate and volunteer at the CEEC.

Procedures

Hours of Operation:

| | |
|---|---|
| Preschool (3 year old students) Cohort Groups | 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. Monday – Tuesday or Wednesday- Thursday (AM Session) |
| Preschool (3 year old students) | 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. Monday-Thursday (AM Session) 12:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Monday – Thursday (PM Session) |
| Prekindergarten (4 year old students) | 12:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m Monday – Friday (PM Session) 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Monday – Friday (Full Day) |

A school calendar is provided inclusive of holidays, Professional Development days, and scheduled school closures. Every effort will be made to alert families of any changes to the calendar throughout the year.

Arrival and Dismissal

Children who attend our program **daily and on time** experience better outcomes than those children who attend only occasionally.

- Please abide by the above start and end times.
- Children who arrive at school 15 minutes after arrival time must be signed in at the main office. Students (in the am and full day programs) arriving after 10:30 must have a note from a Licensed Health Care provider or they will not be allowed to attend. Students (in the pm) arriving after 1:30 must have a note from a Licensed Health Care provider or they will not be allowed to attend.
- For early dismissal, parents must sign their child out at least 30 minutes prior to the end of the session in the main office. Children will NOT be released for early dismissal after 11:30am for the half day program and 3:00pm for the full day program.
- Please report all absences to the office and send a note with your child upon his/her return to school.

Release of Children

Our program is committed to the safety of the children we serve. The following will be strictly enforced:

- Children will only be released to parents/guardians and persons designated as “**Authorized Contacts**” on the Emergency Contact form.
- All persons picking up children must have proper identification at all times, including parents/guardians.
- If a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access to the child by a court order, CEEC will secure documentation to this effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the documentation.

Inclement Weather and Program Closings

Announcements for school and child care closings and delays can be accessed via the Christina School District Closing Line at 302-552-2726 or the district website: <http://www.christinak12.org>.

To sign up for email and text alerts, please visit the Parent page of the Christina School District website.

In anticipation of snowy, colder weather, please be aware of a policy surrounding our HALF DAY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM ONLY. Should an early dismissal be predicted for any given day, we will cancel our half day sessions. More about this policy will be sent home directly with those students affected.

Transportation

The Christina School District provides curb to curb transportation for children with disabilities and children eligible for our SFECEP (State Funded Early Childhood Education Program) funding. Buses are equipped with seat belts and an aide is always present on the bus to assist the children. A transportation form must be completed for each child eligible for transportation. The names of the adults authorized to take your child off the bus must be on the transportation form.

Written notification must be provided for changes or additions of authorized adults to the transportation form.

Changes to drop off/pick up locations must be reported to the office and a new transportation form must be completed. **All changes require a minimum of 5 days to take effect.** A representative from Transportation Services will contact parents with bus times and bus numbers. Contact Transportation Services at 302-454-2281 for bus information.

Car Riders

The safety of our students is always top priority. Please abide by the following rules when utilizing the car rider line. A car rider map and name plate will be given out by the classroom teacher.

- Follow the directions of the CEEC staff directing traffic in the parking lot.
 - Any parent or guardian NOT able to follow the direction of our staff, will be asked to refrain from dropping off or picking up.
- Adults must remain with their vehicle at all times.
- Children must remain secured in car seats at all times.
- Assist your child in exiting the car and hand your child to a CEEC staff member. CEEC staff members will not open car doors or buckle/unbuckle students from their car seats.
- Stay in the car rider line. Do not pull out. Do not pass cars as children may walk between the cars.
- Please be patient! CEEC staff will make every effort to get children in and out of cars quickly while ensuring the safety of all involved.

Communication

The CEEC values communication with families and strives to provide information, feedback, student progress information and resources on an ongoing basis.

- * Class DoJo will serve as the primary mode of communication between CEEC staff and families. Regular announcements and information will be posted on Class DoJo. Family members will have access to their child's teacher and to a whole school Class DoJo and should monitor both closely.
- * Each child will receive a communication folder for notes, announcements and student work.
- * Teachers will post a weekly newsletter to provide information regarding theme activities within the classroom, ideas for follow-up at home, reminders, songs and books.
- * Information will be posted on the CEEC website at www.christinaeec.org.
- * Parent Link, an automated phone system, will be used to provide information to families regarding school-wide events.
- * Conferences are scheduled to communicate with families and teachers to discuss individual student progress.

Home visits are another important component of the program at the CEEC. Every child new to the center or new to a teacher will have a home visit scheduled at the beginning of the school year. The goal of our home visits include:

- Getting to know our families
- Building a rapport with children and families
- Educating families about the CEEC program and services
- Developing child and family goals

Volunteering

Parents know their children best and we value parents as their child's first teacher. Parents and guardians are encouraged to volunteer with the program. Please contact Karen Vietri, our SFECEP Coordinator, to arrange volunteer services. Some of the volunteer opportunities include:

- Policy Council
- Parent Group
- Parent committee work
- Classroom support
- Cafeteria support
- Recess support
- Special activities and school events
- Support skills

Karen Vietri, SFECEP Coordinator

302-454-2720

karen.vietri@christina.k12.de.us

Health and Safety

Christina Early Education Center (CEEC) works with families to ensure that each child is up-to-date on all preventative medical procedures, including doctor's visits, immunizations and screenings.

Requirements to attend the program:

- All necessary immunizations and shots required by state health laws
- Screening/risk assessment for tuberculosis within the past 12 months
- Lead blood test
- Physical (doctor's exam) performed in the last year
- TB testing required if born in or traveled to a high TB burdened area
- Child Emergency Card

Our school nurse is available during school hours to assist children. Parent contact information must be kept up-to-date on the Emergency Card. CEEC staff must be able to contact a parent/guardian at all times in case of illness or injury while a child is at school.

Medication can be given to children by the school nurse following the state policies regarding medication administration:

Prescription Medication (must be brought in by the adult):

- Medication must be prescribed by a physician.
- All medication must be brought in by an adult, it cannot be sent in with a student this includes inhalers and epipens. All medication must be picked up prior to the last day of school or it will be discarded.
- The medication must be kept in original prescription container with the child's name, dosage and method of administration
- The parent/guardian must provide a written request to the school nurse to administer the medication

Non-prescription Medication (must be brought in by the adult):

- All medications sent to the school in an update to date original container
- Parent/guardian must request in writing that a specific non-prescription medication be administered.

Medical Conditions

A current **School Action Plan** from your child's physician will be required if your child has the following medical condition:

- Asthma which requires asthma medication during the school day
- Seizures
- Allergies that require an epipen
- Child with a cast or splint must have a doctor note stating that they are cleared to return to school and what accommodations are needed.

The **School Action Plan** will assist the nurse in providing care or treatment for your child during the school year. The **School Action Plan** for Asthma or Seizures may be obtained from your child's physician or the school nurse.

Illness Policy

The CEEC is committed to ensuring the health and safety of each child and family we serve. The following are symptoms that, if a child displays, he or she must be temporarily excluded from participation in the program:

- High temperature of 100.4 and above
- Vomiting and/or Diarrhea (two or more episodes within 24 hours)
- Rash over body, hives (may require medical clearance to return)
- Head Lice, only if live lice are present
- Severe abdominal pain
- Yellow or green thick discharge from nose
- Rapid breathing or severe coughing
- Two or more episodes of vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Red eyes with discharge
- Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin (requires immediate care)

- Impetigo or ringworm

Ensure that your child is healthy enough to participate in school before returning to school (24 hours fever free, 24 hours free of vomiting and/or diarrhea without medication).

For minor illnesses or injuries, parents and/or guardians may be notified by the nurse or classroom staff.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

The CEEC staff are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Delaware Division of Family Services (DFS). If abuse or neglect is suspected, the school nurse will be contacted and an official report of abuse or neglect will be processed. The responsibility of determining whether or not abuse or neglect has actually occurred rests with DFS.

Title 16- Health and Safety Regulatory Provisions Concerning Public Health. Chapter 9. Abuse of Children 903

“Any physician and other person in the healing arts including any person licensed to render services in medicine, osteopathy, dentistry, an intern, resident, nurse, school employee, social worker, psychologist, medical examiner, or any other person who knows or reasonably suspects child abuse or neglect shall make a report in accordance with 904 of this title.”

Meals and Nutrition

Breakfast and lunch are provided to children the full-day program at no cost to the family. School breakfast and lunch menus can be found by visiting the Christina School District website and clicking the School Menu tab. The menus for the program are designed by the Christina School District Child Nutrition Services. This ensures that the meals are nutritious, attractive and tasty, and provide one-third of the Recommended Daily Allowance of nutrients for preschoolers. Families are always given the choice to pack a lunch from home for their child.

Family Style meal service is used at the center. Children will serve themselves all menu items from the bowls, platters, baskets and pitchers provided. The children are encouraged to taste all foods, but they are never forced to eat anything they do

not want. One goal of the program is to introduce the children to a wide variety of foods. Teachers will sit with the children during meal times, model appropriate eating behavior and initiate conversations, similar to a home setting. Teachers will also use this time for instruction so that nutrition education is incorporated into the routine of meals.

Necessary adaptations will be made for any children with special needs.

Food Allergies

All food allergies must be reported on your child's Emergency Form to ensure that staff is aware of foods that must be avoided. Special request menu items can be substituted with **written medical verification** by an authorized medical professional.

The CEEC and Christina School District Child Nutrition staff is available to discuss your child's food allergies, special diet requests or any nutrition concerns or questions you may have. Child Nutrition staff can be reached at 302-454-2022.

Classroom Snack

The CEEC is committed to promoting a healthy lifestyle for children and families. It is acceptable to send in a snack to share with your child's class to celebrate his/her special day. Your child's teacher will notify you of any other allergies or issues specific to his/her classroom.

Requirements for classroom snacks:

- **Purchased in a store**
- In the original and sealed container

Holidays and Celebrations

The CEEC is interested in facilitating meaningful experiences for all children; therefore, we do not emphasize specific holiday celebrations. Children will be encouraged to share meaningful experiences from their own family traditions with the class. Conversations about the diversity of cultures will be encouraged, and will be included as part of our curriculum and program.

Additionally, throughout the year there will be a variety of educational and social

family events. These events are designed to engage families and staff in special interest topics such as literacy and getting ready for kindergarten. Announcements will be made in advance of each event.

What to send to school with your child:

Appropriate clothing

Children are involved in active play every day—both inside and outside. It is important that children come to school dressed appropriately. This includes:

- Comfortable clothing, which is easy to put on and take off (for easier toileting)
- Comfortable shoes, preferably sneakers
- Appropriate clothing and outerwear (depending on the weather)

Children must have at least one complete change of clothing at all times in case of messy play or a bathroom accident. Include diapers and wipes if appropriate.

All clothing must be labeled with child's name in permanent marker.

Backpack

All children need a backpack. Teachers will place the student name tag on the child's backpack that will include child's name, classroom teacher and bus numbers. Make sure that your child's name is on the backpack.

If, at any time, a family is unable to supply a backpack, lunch box or clothing for their child, please contact the Family and Community Services Coordinator for support.

Weather Policy

Research strongly encourages active free play outside for young children. According to research from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), children who play outdoors engage in more creative play, have active imaginations, demonstrate respect towards peers, develop stronger immune systems, and tend to be fitter and leaner.

The CEEC has adopted the following policy in regards to children playing outside.

Children will participate in outdoor activities daily unless the weather does not permit this type of play. Weather permitting means that children should go outside every day unless there is active precipitation or there is a public announcement that advises people to remain indoors. These public announcements occur on days when it is unsafe to go outside, including extreme heat and cold or poor air quality. The staff at the CEEC will make real-time decisions regarding outdoor play, which could change throughout the day based on the conditions at the time.

Please dress your child appropriately for the weather to ensure that they are prepared to participate in outdoor learning on a daily basis. Students will not be held indoors unless a doctor's note indicates a medical condition that prevents them from participating in outdoor play.

Child Development

Ages and Stages

Ages and Stages is a screening tool that will provide a quick check of your child's development. We are asking all families to complete two questionnaires, one for overall development and one specifically for social-emotional development. You can choose to complete the questionnaire in English or Spanish.

Positive Behavior Supports

The CEEC strives to positively guide and support children that emphasizes respect for each child; developmentally appropriate expectations of children's behavior and the use of positive behavior support and strategies.

Our curriculum, Conscious Discipline, is a trauma-informed, evidence-based, and research-backed program that focuses on developing discipline within children. With the help of Conscious Discipline, we are better able to integrate social-emotional learning, discipline, and self-regulation into our daily schedules. Conscious discipline uses the latest brain research to determine why students react and behave the way they do.

Our staff members strive to create a relaxed, positive environment that enables children to explore and experiment while remaining safe and feeling well-supported. Through positive guidance strategies and modeling social skills, staff help children learn pro-social behaviors, build confidence and self-esteem, and develop greater respect for others' rights and feelings, as well as a sense that they themselves are respected.

In addition to Conscious Discipline, staff provide positive behavior supports by encouraging children to solve problems and develop a sense of inner control. Children are given authentic choices and the opportunity to be an active part of decision-making in their environment, thus fostering a sense of personal responsibility. Staff help children to understand the reasons for rules and limits and to feel good about their choices. Our staff uses a variety of strategies for positive behavior supports and guidance in the classroom, including the following:

- Clear, simple directions and positive reminders.
- Rules stated positively rather than negatively: "Please walk" instead of "Don't run."

- Behaviors modeled for children to use; e.g. always being courteous and attentive.
- Advanced planning to anticipate problems.
- Redirection to correct unacceptable behavior.
- Assistance to help children understand the consequences of their actions, and use problem-solving skills to develop solutions.
- Encouragement of a growing sense of independence.
- Reinforcement of children's positive behavior: "Thank you for giving that truck to Daniel."
- Realistic expectations of the developmental level of each child.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

The primary role of MTSS is to provide support and suggest interventions to preschool staff so that all children are provided with a multi-tiered level of support that promotes success in the least restrictive environment. MTSS provides learning, social, speech and language, motor and/or behavioral support through observations, ongoing records, screenings, interviews and other informal assessments. MTSS will be used to provide a multi-disciplinary, problem-solving approach for all students.

Delaware Early Learning Foundations: Preschool

The Delaware Early Learning Foundations (DELF) is a document that was developed by a work group through the Delaware Department of Education to serve as a curriculum framework. It is used to guide daily, weekly and monthly planning for our classrooms at the CEEC. The purpose of the DELF is to provide an outline of the types of learning opportunities children need before kindergarten.

The DELF's are linked to the skill expectations children need as they enter kindergarten and provide a curriculum guide for programs. Learning opportunities are intended to be a set of broad-based activities through which children are exposed to new learning concepts, having opportunities to acquire new skills, practice those skills as well as master previously learned skills. Teachers at the CEEC use the DELF to plan lessons and link to student goals.

The DELF is organized into eight domains:

- Social Emotional

- Approaches to Learning
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science
- My Family, My Community, My World
- Creative Expression
- Physical Development and Health

• Curriculum

The CEEC uses a variety of curriculum guides to provide the framework for classroom planning and instruction. Our goal is to implement curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children. The following curricula are used to support our instruction:

- **Benchmark Ready to Advance**—Ten thematic units that blend social-emotional development with academic learning. Each topic is interconnected and build domain-specific knowledge with early literacy skills over time.
- **Conscious Discipline**— Social-emotional learning
- **Handwriting without Tears**-Pre-writing and fine motor development

Assessment

The Christina Early Education Center recognizes the importance of early intervention and values high-quality education for developing skills that children need to succeed in Kindergarten. Ages and Stages is a screening tool that will provide a quick check of your child's development. With the use of parent questionnaires, we are able to screen and assess the developmental performance of children in the areas of communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem solving, personal-social skills, and social-emotional skills. By using Ages and Stages, we are able to identify students who would benefit from MTSS services or more in-depth evaluation for developmental delays.

The staff at the CEEC further uses assessment to monitor children's strengths,

progress and needs. The purpose of assessment is to support decision making regarding teaching and learning; identify concerns which may require focused intervention for individual children; and help staff improve educational and developmental interventions. CEEC uses **Teaching Strategies GOLD**, an observational assessment to document student progress. Teachers document progress and skill development through ongoing observations and input from families. Checkpoints are completed in the fall, winter and spring and information is shared with families during conferences and home visits.

Additionally, throughout the year, the CEEC staff completes additional assessments for students with special education needs. Teachers and specialists administer the **Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Children, Third Edition (AEPS-3)** to determine skill levels across important early developmental areas. There are three ways to gather information and data to complete the AEPS-3 test including observation, direct testing, and report. Throughout the year, **Child Outcome Summaries** are also completed. This data is used to track student progress and is reported to the US Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to document that early intervention programs are making a positive difference in the lives of young children with disabilities and their families in Delaware. You are an integral part of the team and provide valuable information to our staff to help document progress. For more information, visit www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/students_family/earlychildhood/default.shtml .

Transitions

The CEEC staff works with families to ensure a smooth transition into preschool, between classrooms/programs, and into kindergarten.

Transition into Preschool/Prekindergarten:

- Families are invited to tour the building at time of interest in program or transition from Part C (Child Development Watch)
- Home visits are offered to all families prior to the start of the school year with classroom staff (teacher and paraprofessional)
- A “Meet the Teacher” event is held in September for families and children to tour the school, classroom, and meet staff
- Open House is held in October for parents/guardians to interact with the teacher and learn specific information related to early childhood curriculum and assessment

Transitions between classrooms/programs:

- At times a move of staff members and/or students becomes necessary to aide in the growth of our students.
- While we strive for consistency of placement, it is not uncommon to consider moves based on changes in student projection and enrollment, student need, and change in available staffing ratios.
- We strive to keep class sizes low and balanced for all children within our program, proving the opportunity to provide more individualized support to students when possible.
- When considering a move, we focus on our team approach for placement, inclusive of current team members and teacher. Our classroom placement policy is based on finding a match for student’s learning needs, their social emotional needs, and their peer relations.
- If a move is necessary, we will create a time line to assist in the transition process, first introducing a student to their new classroom and then transitioning slowly over a period of a week or more depending on student need.

- If a transition is needed, you will receive advance notification and will have the opportunity to touch base with new staff, see the new room, and to visit the new space with your child.
- Careful consideration is given to all changes in classroom and placement. Your flexibility and support during this process is greatly appreciated.

Transition into Kindergarten:

- Families receive a letter indicating their neighborhood elementary school with an invite to a Kindergarten Showcase at that school
- Countdown to Kindergarten activities are scheduled to provide families with informational sessions related to expectations for kindergarten
- Students participate in Kindergarten visits at a neighboring elementary school
- All students practice walking through the cafeteria line and entering their student identification number to “purchase” lunch (completed during the months of May and June)
- Transition meetings are offered for all students with disabilities moving into Kindergarten by inviting the receiving school to an IEP meeting with the family and current educational team
- End of the year home visits are offered to all four year old students by the classroom staff

Feedback for Us

We encourage parents and community representatives to contact the Christina Early Education Center to express feedback with the program. If you are concerned with your child or something in the classroom, please let your child's teacher know as soon as possible. These types of concerns are usually resolved at the classroom level by discussion with the classroom staff. If you and the teacher are not able to resolve the problem, please contact the Family Services Coordinator/ Building Principal to discuss your concerns. If your concern involves personnel issues or operations issues (how the program is run) please contact the building Administration.

A meeting may be arranged with you, the teacher, and any other staff or volunteer you wish to include. The CEEC staff prefers to address concerns before they turn into problems.

We also want you to let us know when you like something about the program. Please share your concerns and good experiences with us!

Thank you for entrusting your child in our care. At CEEC our motto is "It Starts HERE!" Your child's successful education begins right here at the Christina Early Education Center!

