

# Pioneers Park Nature Center



## Preschool Parent Handbook 2019-2020

### Welcome!

This handbook is a guide for parents and caregivers of children enrolled in the Preschool Program at the Pioneers Park Nature Center. The information contained herein explains the requirements, policies, and procedures of the City of Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department and the State of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. A copy of licensing regulations is available for review at the Nature Center office.

If you have questions about preschool policies, procedures, schedules, or anything else, do not hesitate to contact us!



3201 S. Coddington 68522  
402.441.7895 naturecenter@lincoln.ne.gov

**The preschool opened in 2000.**

**The staff is committed to our natural world, to active learning, and to fostering each child's strengths and potential for growth. We provide a warm, nurturing environment that utilizes excellent teaching, diverse natural habitats and an extensive collection of hands-on teaching materials that lay a solid foundation for further learning.**

<b>Class times</b>	<b>Class</b>
9:00 am to 11:30 am	Monday/Wednesday/Friday AM
9:00 am to 11:30 am	Tuesday/Thursday AM
12:30 pm to 2:30 pm	Tuesday/Thursday PM
12:30 pm to 2:30 pm	Monday/Wednesday/Friday PM

## **DESCRIPTION OF PRESCHOOL SERVICES**

Ages of children served: Preschool serves children ages 3-5. Children must be toilet trained and self-sufficient with their zippers, buttons, and snaps.

Academic calendar: We operate September - May. We do not follow the Lincoln Public Schools elementary school calendar for program breaks and holidays however we do follow their weather closures.

Developmental program: Preschool offers developmentally appropriate activities for children that allow them to grow by incorporating new experiences into their daily routine. Our program addresses the following developmental domains:

- Approaches to learning
- Creative arts
- Health and physical development
- Language and literacy development
- Social and emotional development

Special services provided: Our special nature content supports language development and allows preschoolers to have fun while playing and learning kindergarten readiness skills.

Expectations of parent/guardian:

- Complete all forms in full when you receive them at the start of the school year.
- Read, understand, follow, and support all written policies.
- Keep all contact information current.
- Provide phone numbers where staff can immediately contact someone to arrange for the pick-up of ill children within 30 minutes of notification.
- Send weather-appropriate footwear and clothing for both indoor and outdoor play. Shoes need to be closed-toe. No sandals please.
- Prior to class, apply sunscreen and insect repellent (away from gardens.)
- Umbrellas are not allowed in class or during hike time.
- Be on time for arrival/dismissal.

## PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Due upon registration .....Enrollment fee

Due the 1st of every month.....Monthly tuition

Late pick-up fees .....A late fee of \$5.00 for every 5 minutes the child remains at the program after dismissal will be due at pick up.

ABOUT OUR FEES: Preschool tuition is calculated according to the number of days the program is scheduled to be in session throughout the year and divided into nine equal monthly installments.

## PAYMENT POLICY

- Families must pay in advance according to the schedule above unless a special payment plan is approved. You will not receive a bill.
- Fees are charged on the basis of full-time enrollment. The fee is the same if a child is ill, out-of-town, suspended, or out for any other reason.
- We accept cash, checks, credit and debit cards, and money orders or automatic payment is available. Receipts are provided upon request.
- If we receive a returned check, future payments must be paid by cash, credit card, or money order.
- The enrollment fee is non-refundable and non-transferable.
- Families will be notified if a payment becomes past due.
- Thirty days written notice is required to cancel enrollment prior to the start of the next month. Failure to provide 30 days written notice will result in full charges for the following month.
- If enrollment is cancelled and a family later wishes to re-enroll, the child will be placed on a waiting list until an opening becomes available. The family will not be required to pay an additional enrollment fee.
- Families with past due fees on the last day of the program will be turned over to the City Attorney's Office. You will not be able to enroll in any Parks and Recreation program until payment is received.
- **Check payments:** Can go directly in the black box, which is located in the classroom.
- **Cash payments:** Please put the correct amount of cash into the envelope which is located at the front of the black box and write your child's first and last name on the front of the envelope.
- **Credit card payments:** Please proceed to the visitor service desk and they will be more than happy to process your payment.
- **Automatic monthly payment:** Please see the Preschool Director for the required form if you wish this type of payment.
- **Pay monthly fees online.** Go to [parks.lincoln.ne.gov](http://parks.lincoln.ne.gov), click the green "ePay" button, and select Parks and Recreation Programs & Classes. Sign up for a MyInterlinc account and create a Parks and Rec client profile for your child. If you have ever paid your water bill, pet license, or a parking ticket online, you already have an account. Call us if you need help.
- **Late payments:** There will be a \$15.00 fee applied if your child's tuition is not paid by the 15th of each month.

## ILLNESS EXCLUSION POLICY FOR CHILDREN

Lincoln Parks and Recreation is committed to keeping the spread of illness to a minimum, and we take the following steps to do so:

- Children wash hands throughout the day.
- Equipment is disinfected on a regular basis.
- Parents are notified of any communicable disease outbreak at the program.
- Strict and consistent enforcement of our criteria for excluding participants due to illness.

Please do not send your child to the program if they cannot participate in regular daily activities or if the following signs of a possibly contagious illness are present. Children who exhibit the following signs of a possibly contagious illness will be excluded. A parent will be called to pick up the child. Due to the additional care required when a child is ill, we request parents pick up their child within 30 minutes.

### PARTICIPANTS WITH THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS MUST BE EXCLUDED:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Diarrhea</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When a watery stool causes an “accident” or</li><li>• If the frequency of watery stools exceeds two stools in the past 24 hours.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Vomiting</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 or more times in the past 24 hours</li></ul>   |
| <b>Fever</b>            | Temperature above 100°F and behavior change or other illness symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.)  |
| <b>Rash</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• With fever or behavior change: until a physician has determined the illness is not contagious.</li><li>• Chickenpox: until all lesions have dried or crusted.</li><li>• Impetigo (symptoms include blisters/sores on the face, neck, and/or hands): until 24 hours after treatment has been started.</li><li>• Mouth sores with drooling.</li><li>• Head lice or ringworm until after the first treatment.</li></ul> |
| <b>Not Feeling Well</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any child who requires more care than can be given by staff in a group setting or a child who is unable to participate in regular daily activities.</li></ul>  |

Returning to the program: Following exclusion, participants will be re-admitted to the program when they are able to participate in regular daily activities and have been on appropriate medication or symptom-free without medication for at least 24 hours.

Doctor notes: There may be times when it is necessary to present a doctor’s note to indicate an illness is not infectious. Staff may request that you consult with your child’s physician. The final decision on whether to exclude a child is made by the Preschool Director and/or Nature Center Coordinator.

## **MEDICATION**

If your child needs to take medication at preschool (prescription or over-the-counter), you must request and complete a Medication Consent Form. All medication is kept secured in a designated location and must be checked in with the Preschool Director. IMPORTANT: Medications that are used on an “as needed” basis (or “PRN”) require a note from a medical professional describing the symptom(s) and dosage.

## **PICK-UP AND IDENTIFICATION**

Children will only be released to the parent(s)/guardian(s) listed on the program registration form. Written and signed permission from a registering parent/guardian will be required for the child to be released to any other adult. IDs will be checked when staff does not recognize the person picking up a child.

## **WEATHER CLOSURES**

Out of consideration for the safety of our students and their families, preschool recognizes Lincoln Public School (LPS) decisions regarding “snow days” and other weather-related closures.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Our expectations for behavior: Be safe. Be respectful. Be responsible.

We use the Standard Discipline Policy of the Parks and Recreation Department. Please review this policy with your child. Every effort will be made to resolve behavior problems, but please be aware that if there are continuous or serious behavior issues, your child may be suspended. If suspension becomes necessary, parents will be contacted the same day. We appreciate your support in managing behavioral issues.

When there is an infraction of rules, we issue a warning and encourage children to continue participation or ask them to take a time-out, and then resume participation. Time-outs never exceed more than one minute for each year of the child’s age.

- If disruptive behavior continues after one time-out, the child is given a second time-out and then may resume classroom activity.
- If disruptive behavior continues after two time-outs (or refusal to go to a time-out) the child may be suspended for the rest of the day or for the following day. Parents will be contacted.

The above process will be used again if there is a second incident of continued disruptive behavior. If a second suspension is necessary, it will again be for the rest of the day or the following day. If a third suspension is necessary, it will be for one week. A fourth suspension will again be for one week. An additional suspension could be for 30 calendar days or to the end of the program depending on the incident. Please note – for incidents which are more serious, we may need to move through these steps more quickly than outlined.

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

**ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL**— Please sign your child in and out at the front desk. We will mail you the sign-in/out credentials. The classroom doors will be unlocked at 9:00 am daily for the morning sessions and at 12:30 pm for the afternoon sessions. We will lock the classroom doors approximately five minutes after school has started. They will remain locked during the course of the day until dismissal.

Please sign your child out in the same manner as signed in. After you have your child, please leave the classroom so that the teachers can prepare for the next class. If you observe that a child you know is being picked up late, please follow our normal pick-up procedure and leave the classroom with your child. Please do not wait with the other child, as it may interfere with the pick-up process once their parent/guardian does arrive.

If you would like to have an in-depth conversation with your teacher or the Preschool Director, a conference time can be scheduled. Children must be accompanied when they enter and leave the building. For the safety of your child, and to respect the public space for other visitors at the Nature Center, please do not let children play in or around:

- Parking lot
- Bike rack
- Benches/kiosk area
- Roadway

Safe gathering areas are available just east of the parking lot and drive way at the picnic tables under the trees, and in front of the Chet Ager Building.

**PARKING** — The Nature Center staff asks that everyone park in the main parking lot. The parking lot and main concrete walkway to the Prairie Building is ADA accessible and access is maintained in all weather conditions.

**SNACKS**—The Nature Center provides the daily snack. The snack calendar will be provided to all families. If you have NOT alerted the staff of food allergies, please do so immediately.

For your child's health and safety we will:

- Serve foods and beverages that meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards.
- Prohibit outside candy/treats to be brought in or shared.

**CELEBRATIONS AND REWARDS**—Food allergies, diabetes, and health risks associated with childhood obesity cause us to look seriously at what we teach youth about health and using foods as a focus of celebrations. Food and beverages will not be used as reward or punishment. Two celebrations/events per year are allowed that do not need to adhere to the USDA standards.

Holiday parties and other celebrations will:

- Focus on fun activities over food.
- Prohibit outside candy/treats to be brought in or shared.

**BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS**—Please DO NOT use the preschool/preK as a facility to distribute your child's birthday invitations to his/her party. In years past, the distribution of invitations snowballed into having the children distribute the thank-yous, then, pretty soon a couple of presents were brought to the classroom if a child wasn't able to attend the party etc. Whether you are inviting the whole class or just a few classmates to your child's party, please use a different avenue beside the preschool/preK to hand out birthday invitations and presents.

**PHOTOGRAPHS**—Please respect others' privacy and refrain from taking photos of the children while in the classroom or in the Nature Center outdoor areas. Some families have specifically requested not to have their child's photo taken.

**NEWSLETTER**—You will receive a newsletter from the Nature Center that will include the snack calendar, upcoming events, and any other relevant information. Please watch for emails from [naturecenter@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:naturecenter@lincoln.ne.gov). A copy of the newsletter will also be posted in the hallway outside of the Preschool/PreK classrooms.

**JOURNALS**—The artwork is generally displayed on our preschool bulletin board for you to observe and discuss with your child prior to filing the artwork into the journal. The prekindergarten letter of the week worksheets and journals will be compiled into a folder which will be sent home at the end of the year.

**SHOW AND TELL**— Each child will have the opportunity to bring an item for show and tell; please do not bring additional items to class.

**LOST AND FOUND**—Please check with the front desk staff if your child has misplaced a personal item. Any items left unclaimed at the end of the semester will be donated to a local charity. Lincoln Parks and Recreation is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

#### **PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

We reserve the right to discontinue your preschool/prekindergarten enrollment at any time if we find parental/guardian behavior to be detrimental or disruptive to the program or staff during indoor and outdoor activities while class is in session. If you do not agree with or no longer prefer the services of our program and how we facilitate them, you have the right to discontinue the preschool/prekindergarten service at any time.

Thank you for enrolling your child in our preschool/preK programs at the Nature Center.

**Questions or concerns please contact:  
Preschool Director - 402-441-8669  
Nature Center Coordinator - 402-441-8709  
[naturecenter@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:naturecenter@lincoln.ne.gov)**



The Preschool Program at Pioneers Park Nature Center  
is owned and operated by the City of Lincoln  
Parks and Recreation Department

Pioneers Park Nature Center  
3201 S. Coddington, Lincoln, NE 68522  
402-441-7895