

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



COLUMBUS
CITY SCHOOLS

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2/25/2020

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CURRICULUM

Columbus City Schools' Early Childhood Education Program (ECE) implements a written, research-based curriculum that is comprehensive and in line with Ohio's Early Learning Content Standards. These standards are set by the Ohio Department of Education, and emphasize all areas of development- cognitive, social, emotional and physical. The developmentally appropriate curriculum addresses the learning needs of individual children, as well as the group needs of all children, guiding them all to success.

The Office of Early Learning and School Readiness has provided direction for the screening and assessment of preschool-aged children. As a result, Columbus City Schools' Early Childhood Education Program believes that assessment is an ongoing process and should be used as a "snapshot" of where your child is within each area of childhood development. Assessing the progress of children occurs throughout the school year.

Developmental assessment tools may include:

- Ohio Early Learning Assessment (ELA)
- Brigance Screening Tool
- Informal Teacher Assessments: i.e. observations, anecdotal records, checklists
- Big Day Curriculum assessment – (SECI)

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

Having a highly qualified staff is essential to the quality of the program. As a result, several days during the school year are set aside for the staff to attend staff development sessions. These dates are established and given to all families at the beginning of the school year. **On ECE Professional Development days, there is no school for ECE children.**

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips for the ECE Program are considered a part of the curriculum and are planned around themes, special days/events and program goals. All families are asked to complete a form at the beginning of the school year, giving their child permission to participate in all school field trips. Any child without a signed permission form must remain at home on the day of the field trip. Only those children who have been given permission will be allowed to go on the trips. Family members are welcome to attend field trips with their child. If there are children who have difficulty following rules and/or listening to adults, an adult family member will be asked to accompany them on the trip.

HOME VISITS

ECE staff (teacher and instructional assistants) sometimes make home visits to participating families. This is the time for the instructional staff to see the child with their families at home and to get to know them better. It is an opportunity for the parents to ask questions and to learn about what is happening with your child in school. It is an informal meeting, and the families are not expected to entertain or provide refreshments for the staff. Most visits last 20 to 30 minutes. Home visits are arranged ahead of time, and the staff will only visit homes where prior arrangements have been made.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Columbus City Schools has an open door policy. Parents are encouraged to visit the school, observe the classrooms, volunteer and participate in school functions whenever possible. Office staff will notify the ECE staff if a parent is coming to their room as a courtesy to the staff. For individual needs/conferences, parents are encouraged to arrange a separate time to meet with staff when students are not present.

In accordance with ODE Preschool Licensing Rule 3301-37-07-(E): "Any parent of a child enrolled in the program shall be permitted unlimited access to the school during its hours of operation to contact his child, evaluate the care provided by the program, the premises, or for other purposes approved by the director. Upon entering the premises, the parent shall report to the school office."

HOURS OF OPERATION

ECE Classrooms and most Inclusive ECE Classrooms (those classrooms with both special needs students and ECE peers) follow a full day schedule, generally from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. However, ECE students may participate in the breakfast program at their school which typically begins at 8:30 a.m.

In addition, there are half day ECE Classrooms for 3, 4, and 5 year old children identified as having special needs. The morning sessions in these classrooms generally is from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.. However, these students may participate in the breakfast program at their school which typically begins at 8:30 a.m. The afternoon session in these classrooms is from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

EARLY LEAVE / SCHOOL CANCELLATION

There may be times when school is closed other than those that are identified on the school calendar. Weather conditions of ice, flooding, and snow have caused the closing of schools in the past. If the schools are closed due to weather conditions, information will be posted on the district website and announced on local radio and television stations.

TOILET TRAINING GUIDELINES

A child must be toilet trained before attending the ECE program in the district. Toilet trained ECE children: no longer wear diapers or disposable underwear (pull ups), can tell an adult when they need to go to the bathroom, and can attend to their own hygiene care. **(Please note, this policy does not apply to children who have IEPs)**

Accidents can and do happen so we ask you to send a change of clothes for your child to school. Accidents, by definition are unusual incidents and should only happen infrequently. If toilet accidents frequently occur at school, we suggest discussing a strategy and time frame with the ECE staff to allow for additional toilet training at home before returning to school.

REGISTRATION / ENROLLMENT

***Please note that the enrollment/placement process is slightly different for students who have IEPs**

Pre-K students must be 4 years old by September 30th. If your child will be 5 years old by September 30th he/she is not eligible for Pre-K but eligible for Kindergarten. * Note: Students who qualify for Special Education services have different age requirements.

The online registration (OLR) begins each year in February and appointments begin in April at Central Enrollment. Enrollment in the ECE Program is on a first come first serve basis. Enrollment begins with completion of the online registration (Speedy Pass) and an appointment with Central Enrollment to turn in required documents. All documents, including the enrollment packet given at Central Enrollment must be completed and turned in for the student to be enrolled and attend.

In addition, ECE students who are enrolled in a school other than their home school are not guaranteed a spot in the Kindergarten program for the following year. Parents must go through the lottery process for a kindergarten placement to remain at the school. If a lottery application is not submitted, students will automatically be assigned to their home school.

ECE students who complete the lottery application for lottery schools (Columbus Africentric, Columbus Spanish Immersion, Duxberry Park, Ecole Kenwood, ECE @ DD, Oakland Park) do not have to lottery for a Kindergarten placement in those buildings. Families of students placed at ECE@DD will need to lottery if they want their student to attend a school other than their home school for Kindergarten.

If a requested ECE program/class is full at the time of registration you may place your child on a waiting list. Placing a child on a waiting list is not a guarantee of a space in the ECE Program.

Because the demand for the ECE Program is so great, students who live outside the Columbus City Schools district will not be considered for enrollment.

Documentation of a physical and dental exam by a health care professional within the last 12 months along with the other enrollment paperwork must be completed before a child attends the program. These exams must be updated with a documented new exam every 12 months.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Mobility is a factor in our schools, and families move from time to time. When this occurs and the ECE student moves out of one ECE attendance area to another ECE attendance area, he/she is given a ECE placement in the new attendance area, *if a space is available*. If the new school is full and no vacancy exists, you may choose to place your child's name on the waiting list. If you have any questions, contact an ECE Social Worker. Central Enrollment requires a copy of your updated proof of residency if changing schools.

For children with IEPs, an alternative placement will be made to a school closer to the new address when deemed appropriate

DRESS CODE

Some schools have a specific dress code. Where this is the case, parents are to adhere to those codes if possible. For those schools without a specific code, please dress your child in casual, comfortable play clothes. They will participate in many active and "messy" activities.

Dress your child appropriately for the season and weather. The children go outside daily, if the weather is above 20 degrees. Please remember to bring hats and gloves and appropriate footwear for your children.

For safety reasons, we ask that you not allow your child to wear open-toes or open-back shoes.

Consistent with the Columbus City Schools dress code, students are not permitted to wear clothing with bare shoulders or bare midriffs and pants must be worn around the waist.

EXTRA CLOTHING

It is important that your child have a change of clothing to be kept at school. While at school, there may be bathroom accidents, water play, painting, and outside activities which may cause clothing to become soiled or wet.

Please send in a pair of pants, a shirt, a pair of socks, and a pair of underwear on the first day of school. If the clothes are sent home, please replace them the next day. It is also recommended that you label the clothing on the inside with the child's name and send your clothing in a plastic bag with your child's name on it.

If your child has an IEP, and is not yet toilet trained, plan to send a set of diapers, or pull-ups as well as wipes to be kept at school throughout the year. The school does not provide diapers and wipes. (Students without an IEP must be completely toilet trained to attend school).

NUTRITION POLICY

The school serves breakfast, lunch, and snack every day. Daily menus will include meals and snacks that meet or exceed the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines. Parents are asked to check the monthly menu that is sent home with students and is available on the CCS website for food preferences. Hot dogs are not served to ECE students because they are classified as a choking hazard by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Food allergies and special diet requests require a physician statement which will be forwarded to the CCS Registered Dietician for evaluation and response on an individual basis.

Healthy Eating Habits

- Age appropriate nutrition education and promotion activities will be integrated into classroom instruction.
- Foods and beverages will not be used as reward or punishment for academic performance or behavior.
- Staff members will encourage students to try new or less favorite foods and never force them to eat something they do not like. Staff members will introduce new foods and encourage students to try them but will not make them taste or eat food if they are not willing to do so.
- Staff will remind students that they can stop eating when they are full.
- Sufficient time will be allocated when students eat meals or snacks at school. The daily schedule will promote a relaxed and adequate period for meals and snacks.
- Children will be required to wash hands before eating.

As part of Columbus City Schools' health and wellness initiative, we will provide examples for parents of healthy meals to provide children with family eating alternatives.

Healthy Drinks

Water will be the only beverage provided to students outside of the breakfast and lunch served in accordance with the National School Lunch Program. This also includes offering water during other classroom celebrations. Drinking water will be freely available to all students throughout the day.

CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS

The ECE classrooms adhere to the building policy of the district concerning classroom celebrations. Non-food treats are preferred for celebrations including donating a class game, book, or small item such as sticker or pencil for each child. If your child's building food policy does allow outside food for celebrations, please adhere to the list of healthy foods provided by the school or contact your child's teacher for suggestions and the food must be commercially prepared with nutrition and allergy information clearly labeled.

BREAKFAST

It is very important that students begin the day with a good breakfast. The school does have a breakfast program; however, parents must have their child at the program, during the breakfast time. If your child misses the breakfast time, please provide that meal before coming to school. Your cooperation with this is most appreciated.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL EVALUATION

Prior to starting school students are required to have written documentation of a medical exam stating the student is in suitable condition for enrollment in the program. Exams must be completed within the last 12 months. Staff will remind families of expiration dates, but **it is ultimately the responsibility of the parent/guardian to assure medical exams are up to date.** All students are required to meet the current State of Ohio vaccine requirements or have an immunization exemption form on file. If you are having difficulty with these requirements, please contact the ECE nurse for assistance. Yearly dental exams are strongly recommended for all students.

If a student has a chronic condition (such as asthma, food allergies, seizures, etc.) or special healthcare needs, please notify your teacher or the ECE nurse so appropriate care can be made available.

The Ohio Department of Education requires that a health screening be completed by a registered nurse yearly while your child is enrolled in our program. This screening includes height, weight, body mass index, vision, hearing, and dental check and will be completed at the school. This does not satisfy the requirement for a medical exam by a healthcare professional.

Healthchek Services for Children Younger than Age 21

Healthchek is Ohio's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Program. It is a service package for babies, kids, and young adults younger than age 21 who are enrolled on Ohio Medicaid.

The purpose of Healthchek is to discover and treat health problems early. If a potential health problem is found, further diagnosis and treatment are covered by Medicaid.

Healthchek covers ten check-ups in the first two years of life and annual check-ups thereafter and offers a comprehensive physical examination that includes:

- medical history
- complete unclothed exam (with parent approval)
- developmental screening (to assess if child's physical and mental abilities are age appropriate)
- vision screening
- dental screening
- hearing assessment
- immunization assessment (making sure child receives them on time)
- lead screening; and
- other services or screenings as needed

If your children are enrolled on Ohio Medicaid, Healthchek services are available to them. If you are younger than age 21 and are also enrolled, you can receive Healthchek services, too.

MEDICATION

We prefer that any medication your child is taking be at home. If necessary, medication can be administered to your child at school after a medication authorization form has been completed and signed by a parent/guardian and a health care professional. School staff are not permitted to accept any medications (prescription or over-the-counter) without this completed form. All medications must be provided by the parent/guardian in the original container with the child's name on the container and must be kept in a locked medication cabinet. **Please notify your child's teacher if medications are needed at school. Medication forms can be obtained from the school, school nurse, or on the CCS website.**

ILLNESS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

Parents/Guardians will be notified immediately to pick up their child from school if he/she becomes ill during the school day. Per ODE licensing rules a child will be excluded from school if he/she has any of the following:

- Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool within a twenty-four-hour period)
- Severe coughing
- Difficult or rapid breathing

- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Temperature of one hundred degrees Fahrenheit
- Undiagnosed rash
- Unusually dark urine and/or grey or white stool
- Stiff neck
- Evidence of scabies, or other parasitic infestation

Please keep your child’s teacher updated with any changes in emergency contact information throughout the school year.

If your child has any of the previously mentioned symptoms you should keep your child home until he/she is well enough to return school. Your child should stay home for 24 hours after diarrhea, vomiting, or fever (without fever reducing medications) has ended.

If your child has a rash, he/she should not come to school without documentation from their physician that states what the rash is and when he/she can return to school. Otherwise, your child will need to remain home until the rash is gone.

Further health information and forms can be found on the CCS website under Health, Family, and Community Services.

PHOTOGRAPHS

During the school year many teachers take pictures or videos for various classroom or school projects. Pictures may even be taken to develop professional training materials. A “Permission to Photograph” release form will be given to you during school enrollment.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

The ultimate goal of discipline is to help children become self-regulated – that is to regulate and control their own behavior. A large portion of the ECE day is used to teach children developmentally appropriate social and emotional behavior.

A complete description of the Early Childhood Discipline Guidelines is included in the Columbus City Schools 2019-2020 Guide to Student Success. Each parent of a child enrolled in an ECE classroom will receive a copy of the Columbus City Schools 2019-2020 Guide to Student Success.

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR PLAN

For the few children who may be disruptive or unable to settle down to a routine, a behavior plan may be developed to help them learn appropriate behavior. If a behavior plan is necessary for your child, you will be contacted by your child’s teacher and invited to meet as a team to develop an appropriate intervention plan.

ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS

It is important for your child to attend school on time every day. When your student misses a significant amount of school, even if the absences are excused, the child misses critical instruction time and learning opportunities. Missing 1 or 2 days every couple weeks can:

- Make it more difficult to develop early literacy skills.

- Make it harder to get ready for kindergarten and beyond.
- Develop a poor attendance pattern that is hard to break.

A new state law defines excessive absence and truancy:

Excessive absence: a student misses 38 or more hours of school in a single month, or 65 or more hours in one school year, with or without a legitimate excuse.

Truancy: a student is absent from school without a legitimate excuse for 30 or more consecutive hours, 42 or more hours in a month, or 72 or more hours in a school year.

If a student is absent for 30 or more consecutive hours (4.5 days) or 42 or more hours in one month (6.5 days) a letter will be sent to the family. If attendance does not improve, a meeting may be scheduled with an ECE Coordinator to develop a success plan.

If a student is absent for 10 consecutive days (65 hours), a letter will be sent to the family and the student will be withdrawn on the 15th day of absence from school.

Students with IEP's may be offered alternative services if chronic absences occur in the ECE classroom.

AUTHORIZATION FOR CHILD PICKUP

Each parent must complete an authorization form that indicates who is allowed to pick up your child from school. If the person authorized to pick up the child is someone other than the parent and someone unknown to the ECE staff, a **valid ID** will be requested on the first time of pickup.

Parents are to contact the ECE teacher when there is a change in the person authorized to pick up your child.

EMERGENCY NUMBER

Parents/Guardians must have 3 emergency phone numbers to call and arrange for student pick up in the event of lateness or other emergencies. These numbers should be on the emergency card given at the time of registration or orientation. The parent must notify the school when the emergency number has changed, and the school **must have a working emergency number to contact at all times.**

CHILD SAFETY, PROTECTION AND THE LAW

Providing a good education for children and keeping them safe are important goals of Columbus City Schools. We will do everything we can to meet these goals. Please also keep in mind that we are legally obligated to report any suspicion of neglect and/or abuse.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) licenses all Columbus City Schools Early Childhood classrooms. An annual monitoring visit is conducted each year to ensure that all sites are in compliance with ODE Preschool Licensing Rules. Compliance reports are posted in each classroom. Parents can obtain a copy of the classroom compliance report by contacting the ECE teacher. To file a complaint regarding a violation of the Preschool Licensing Rules, parents may contact the Office of Early Childhood Education at 614-466-0224 or the Department Ombudsman at 614-466-4839.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The Early Childhood Education Program provides many services for children with special needs, and their families. A detailed description of these services can be found in the pamphlet “Whose IDEA Is This” which is given to parents during the referral, evaluation, and placement process. A brief description of these services is provided below.

Evaluation:

Children who are referred for special needs services may receive a multi-factored evaluation at no cost to the family. This evaluation may include evaluations by school social workers, teachers, school nurses, school psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and/or physical therapists. The evaluation consists of interviews, observations, standardized assessments, and criterion referenced assessments. Once the evaluation is complete, the parents are invited to meet with the evaluation team to determine the child’s eligibility for special education services.

Individualized Education Program (IEP):

If the child is determined to be eligible for special education services according to the Ohio Rules for the Education of Preschool Children with Disabilities, the parents will be invited to participate in a conference to write an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This program is to be developed jointly by the parents, the teacher, and related service personnel. The IEP will include the goals and objectives to be addressed for the child during the school year and must document the location where those services can best be delivered. An IEP must be written before service delivery can begin, must be reviewed at least four times during the school year, and must be revised at least once a year. Parents may request an IEP review at any time.

Related Services:

Following the evaluation, the IEP team may also determine that child is eligible for related services. These services may include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, school psychological services, school nurse services, orientation and mobility, and/or transportation. The amount of each service must be documented on the IEP. These services will be reviewed whenever the IEP is reviewed.

STATEMENT OF RE-EVALUATION FOR SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMMING

(FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPS)

You will be notified when your child is ready for school-age programming. This re-evaluation process is generally referred to as transitioning. You will be contacted and your permission will be required to complete the process. If your child is currently enrolled in a Columbus City School, the evaluation will take place at that school.

The re-evaluation team may include the parents, Special Education Coordinator, School Psychologist, Special Needs Preschool Teacher, General Education Teacher, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, and Speech and Language Pathologist. The team will conduct a series of tests and observations to determine your child’s needs for the following school year. The results of these evaluations will determine if your child will be eligible for special education services under the school age guidelines. Once eligibility is determined then placement options will be discussed with you.

Your child's placement in an Early Childhood Education classroom does not automatically guarantee your child's acceptance into that building for school age services. If you are interested in a school other than your home school for kindergarten, then you need to complete a school lottery/school choice form.

TRANSPORTATION

(FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPs)

Preschoolers with an IEP are transported from home to school and to home again. The district is not required to transport from a baby-sitter's home or other alternative locations. Some exceptions have been made. These arrangements should be discussed at the IEP conference or with your child's teacher. If you live in an area that would be difficult for a school bus to enter and turn around, you may need to take your child to the nearest corner.

An adult will be expected to stay with the child until the bus arrives and assist with getting your child on the bus. An adult is also expected to meet the bus at the end of your child's school day. If there is no adult to meet your child on the return trip home, he/she will be taken to Franklin County Children's Services located at 535 E. Mound St. Columbus, 614-229-7000.

If your child is provided with a harness, which serves as the seat belt on the bus, it is required that your child wear it when he/she gets on the bus to go to school and also when your child returns home from school. The zipper is to go in the back. If your child will be using a car seat, it will stay on the bus.

Parents are expected to call the transportation office and the school when a child will be absent. Transportation's number is 614-365-5074. Initial transportation arrangements and changes are made through the Special Needs Preschool office. Questions about these arrangements can be made by calling 614-365-5205.

Also, if you are planning to pick up your child, please call the school and inform the teacher. If you are not at the school by the time the buses depart, your child will be placed on the bus for home. There is no before/after school child care provided.

PARENT MENTOR PROGRAM *(FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPs)*

For families who are referred for special needs services, the ECE program has parents of children with special needs on staff to answer questions. If you would like to talk to a parent mentor they can be reached at 614-365-5219.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

Parents and family members are an integral part of the Early Childhood Education experience and are involved in all aspects of our program. As the child's first teacher, parents are viewed as partners in the educational process. The Early Childhood Education Program provides a number of options for families to become engaged in their child's learning:

- Get to know your child's teacher and determine the best way to communicate with him/her (phone, email, text, daily notes in book bag, etc.). Share your aspirations for your child.
- Be an informed parent by checking your child's bookbag daily to discover what your child is currently learning in school. Ask questions when you feel you need to know more about a topic.
- Volunteer in the classroom.
- Serve on the Parent Advisory Group for Early Childhood Education (PAGE)
- Attend and help plan family night events and Open House.
- Attend and help plan field trips.
- Participate in parent/teacher conferences and workshops.
- Volunteer to be a room mother/father.
- Participate in family-to-family mentoring opportunities.
- Help write a family newsletter.
- Plan a career day and share your talent with the class.

Families can help their children at home by trying the following tips and ideas:

- Help your child start each day ready to learn by ensuring that he/she has had a good night's sleep, ate a healthy breakfast and gets to school on time.
- Read daily to your child and model reading to your child.
- Make time daily to ask open-ended questions, listen and talk about what your child has learned at school.
- Sign your child up for a library card and visit the library often.
- Provide a quiet, special place for you and your child when reading or doing learning activities together.
- Create learning moments. Everyday events can be an opportunity to learn. For example: setting the table can teach math skills and following directions, during a shopping trip talk about the different colors, shapes, letters, numbers and words you see.
- Collect materials to promote learning at home: books, board games, puzzles and art supplies. Those activities can encourage development of critical thinking skills.
- Each day ask your child to teach you something they learned in school.
- Continue to communicate the importance of school by setting appropriate expectations for your child's success.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FAMILY AGREEMENT FORM

I have reviewed a copy of the Columbus City Schools Early Childhood Education Family Handbook which contains information on the Healthchek program.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

I understand that should my child be placed in an Early Childhood Education classroom, a representative from the Ohio Department of Education will be visiting the classroom annually to ensure compliance to Ohio's Preschool Licensing Rules. I can obtain a copy of the compliance report by contacting my child's teacher. To file a complaint regarding a violation of the Preschool Licensing Rules, I may contact the Office of Early Childhood Education at 614-466-0224 or the Department Ombudsman at 614-466-4839.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

I have reviewed a copy of the Columbus City Schools Guide to Student Success which contains the Early Childhood Education Discipline policy. I have signed the Consent for Release of Information statement located in the back of this document which describes how the district may or may not use photos, audio, video or electronic images of my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

I understand that since my child is placed in an Early Childhood Education classroom, I have the option to be included in the classroom parent/child roster which includes my child's name and date of birth, my name and contact information. This information can be shared with other parents of children in the classroom.

_____ I give consent for the above information to be included on the classroom roster.

_____ I DO NOT give consent for the above information to be included on the roster.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

I am interested in being a representative for the Early Childhood Education Parent Group.

_____ YES _____ NO



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Department of Special Education and Student Support Services
Division of Early Childhood Education

Attendance Policy

It is important for your child to attend school every day. When your student misses a significant amount of school, even if the absences are excused, the child misses critical instruction time and learning opportunities. If a student misses 30 or more consecutive unexcused hours of school, or 42 or more hours unexcused in one month students may be withdrawn from the Early Childhood Education Program. If a student is absent for ten consecutive days (65 hours), a letter will be sent to the family and the student will be withdrawn on the 15th day of absence from school.

If your student will be absent or tardy, it is your responsibility to notify the school and in the case of absence, turn in a note for the absence to be excused.

Absences may be excused for the following reasons:

- Personal illness (may be excused by parent/legal guardian phone call or written excuse or doctor's note)
- Illness or death in the immediate household (with parent/doctor's note submitted)
- Medical or dental appointments, may need written verification of appointment
- Religious holiday

I have read and understand the above.

Signature

Date