



Merrimack Early Education Program
(M.E.E.P.)

**A Merrimack School District
Inclusionary Preschool Program**

PARENT HANDBOOK

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PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The Merrimack Early Education Program (M.E.E.P.) is based on the principles of early childhood development. Within our inclusive educational classroom setting, typical children with and without special needs have the opportunity to play and learn together. Our program considers active participation to be a primary component of the learning process. Consequently, all the children learn through a multi-sensory approach in which they can touch, manipulate, experiment with, and explore their environment and interact with their peers and the classroom staff.

The program utilizes The Creative Curriculum which promotes growth in all areas of development by providing individualized and cooperative learning experiences that stimulate social/emotional, large and fine motor, cognitive, and speech and language development. All of the children are educated in an environment that fosters a greater understanding of the abilities that children possess. The children discover that they all have a lot in common. They all like to have friends, play, be creative and imaginative, and learn new skills. Through the M.E.E.P. program, they are able to do all of this and more utilizing a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

ADMITTANCE CRITERIA POLICY

The Merrimack Early Education Program admits children of any race, color, creed, ethnic or national origin. Children need to be suspected of having a minimum of two significant areas of concern or delay in their overall development to be eligible to attend the program free of charge through the Merrimack School District.

In order to identify a child as in need of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), he or she will be required to have an educational evaluation. In addition, it may be recommended that the child be evaluated in one or more of the following areas: speech and

language, gross and fine motor, behavior, social/emotional, and medical. Children's eligibility for special education is based on the results of the assessments that are given. Children must be determined to have significant delays of 25% or more compared to their chronological age in two or more assessed areas of their development. Referrals for special education services should be made to the Merrimack School District Preschool Coordinator at 765-1453.

Typically developing children who attend M.E.E.P. are required to enroll and pay tuition to the Merrimack School District.

If you have questions, please call the Merrimack School District Preschool Coordinator at 765-1453.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Merrimack Early Education Program is operated as an inclusive preschool program at Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, and James Masticola Elementary School. Children with and without disabilities are enrolled in most classes. Classroom activities, developed by teachers and therapists, emphasize each child's strengths while addressing his/her individual needs within a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

M.E.E.P. encourages development of the following skills: socialization, language, large and small motor, play and self-help, and academic. The program provides both small and large group multi-sensory learning experiences which address the individual needs of all children enrolled in the program. Our daily schedule includes structured activities such as circle time, center time, choice time, and music. In addition, classes offer interest/learning center activities, snack, and outdoor play.

Each classroom has a district hired special education teacher and additional paraeducator support staff. Additional

certified professionals include: Speech/Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, and Physical Therapists. Program Assistants, Speech Assistants, and Certified Occupational Therapist Assistants support the teachers and therapists in meeting the needs of the children. Educational consultants are available as needed.

PROGRAM HOURS

The morning program begins at 8:45 a.m. and ends at 11:15 a.m. The afternoon program begins at 12:00 p.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. Drop off and pick up procedures will be reviewed at the open houses before school begins.

The number of days each child attends M.E.E.P. is determined by program offerings and individual education needs of students.

M.E.E.P. follows the Merrimack School District calendar and guidelines except when otherwise specifically noted.

SNOW DAYS

When it is necessary to close school because of weather conditions, it will be announced over the following Manchester and Nashua radio stations before 7:00 a.m.: WGIR-610 AM/101FM, WBZ-1030 AM, WFEA-1370 AM, WZID-95.7 FM, WMUR-TV Ch.9. Please refrain from calling the school office. If the school district cancels school, all preschool programs will be canceled as well. If there is a school delay, the morning program will be canceled, but the afternoon program will still be in session. If the school district decides to dismiss students early due to an emergency, parents will be contacted.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Absences and tardiness are not conducive to maximum learning and adversely affect the pupil's progress, children should be in school every day except for personal illness, death in the family,

legal appearances, professional appointments that cannot be made at any other time, religious holidays and family emergencies.

To assure student safety, parents are asked to call the school by 8:30 a.m. if students will be absent from school. If your child rides the bus, please call 487-2768 to cancel the bus. This procedure should be followed for each day that your child is absent. Parents should also have children dismissed through the school office. No adults should go to classrooms to pick up their children.

A student will be considered tardy after 8:45 a.m. for the morning class and after 12:00 p.m. for the afternoon class. In order for your child to have a successful school experience, he/she must be here on time each day. Parents are responsible for communicating to the school office the reason for the child's tardiness.

HEALTH AND MEDICATION

Please help us keep all children healthy. If your child becomes ill or injured while at school, the nurse will determine if he/she needs to go home. She will contact you or the person specified by you on the emergency form.

Documentation of immunization (DPT, Polio, MMRO, HIB, and HepB) must be on file for each child the first day the child attends the program. A child health form or an equivalent record of physical examination must be on file for each child prior to admission.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to participate in their child's education. Parent involvement opportunities include following and reinforcing monthly classroom calendars, volunteering with classroom needs, reviewing progress reports, attending parent

conference meetings, and providing ongoing parent/teacher communications (i.e. emails, telephone calls, notes).

Any visitor (a person not acting at the time as an employee of the School District) must report to the school office upon entering the main entrance of the school building. Visitors will sign in, receive a visitor's pass and wait in the office until they are greeted by a M.E.E.P. staff member. Visitor passes must be worn while in the school building and on school grounds.

REQUIRED DAILY ITEMS

1. Please write your child's name on EVERY item that he/she brings to school
2. Backpack – Please make sure the backpack is large enough to fit all of your child's belongings and school projects inside of it.
3. Snack – Please send a small nutritious snack and drink daily for your child. Birthday treats are always welcomed to help the class celebrate your child's special day. Please arrange these in advance because some children may have food allergies.
4. You may keep a change of clothes in school or one in your child's backpack.
5. Diapers and wipes – Please provide these items if your child uses them. You may choose to leave a supply in school or some in your child's backpack.
6. Hats, mittens, snow pants and boots – These items are a must in the cold weather as the children play outside everyday weather permitting. Indoor footwear is also required if your child wears boots to school.
7. Sneakers and comfortable clothing are always encouraged.

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Children will go outside to the playground for playtime daily, weather permitting. Weather permitting means:

1. Outdoor temperature of 20 degrees or above with wind chill factor above 20 degrees
2. No precipitation
3. Satisfactory playground conditions (i.e. no mud, ice, etc.)

Children must be appropriately dressed for the weather. Refer to required daily items listed in previous section.

VIDEOTAPING STUDENTS

Students are occasionally photographed or videotaped throughout the M.E.E.P. program as a tool for observation/recording of specific skills and behaviors. Photos are also used for class projects. If you do not wish for your child to be photographed or videotaped, please send in a written note stating this fact.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

M.E.E.P. encourages positive behavior in children through a combination of developmentally appropriate practices, such as prevention techniques, reinforcement and rewards.

Each child's behavior should be dealt with according to his/her individual needs. Two children exhibiting the same behavior are not necessarily managed identically. Behavior management strategies will be developed to meet children's needs.