

2024-2025
Acorns to Oaks
Parent Handbook



2024

Dear Acorns to Oaks Parents,

Welcome to the 2024-2025 St. Charles Park District's nature-based preschool program. **Please complete and submit the following forms for each child by August 12, 2024.** Completed forms are required prior to your child's attendance in the preschool program. If your child was in our preschool program last year, we do not need another copy of a birth certificate or immunization record.

*A link to provide your child's information will come from **ePACT Network**, following your program enrollment. An account for your child must be created with the following information, in order for students to participate in any preschool class:*

- Parents/guardians must provide Medical, Emergency, and Authorized Pickup information, and include a photo of their child
- A copy of your child's birth certificate, uploaded
- Record of immunizations provided by physician, uploaded
 - If your child is 2 years of age or older and entering preschool for the first time, the chickenpox (varicella) vaccine is required*

Questions? Contact Emily Shanahan, Nature Programs Supervisor, at eshanahan@stcparks.org or 630-513-4393.

Thank you!

Welcome!

Thank you for choosing the St. Charles Park District's Preschool Program for your child's earliest educational experience. Acorns to Oaks Preschool builds on children's natural curiosity about the world by using hands-on, nature-based activities to nurture social, emotional, physical, and academic skill development. Our indoor and outdoor classrooms serve as venues for development, scientific observation, and discoveries. Our preschool teachers plan developmentally and age-appropriate activities that integrate science, math, literacy and the arts while encouraging cooperative learning and social competence. Social and emotional growth occurs in every area of our day. Our indoor and outdoor classrooms promote an atmosphere that encourages children to:

- Become independent
- Respect others
- Develop creativity
- Feel safe within the school environment
- Learn kindergarten readiness skills

The health and safety of St. Charles Park District participants and staff is our top priority. *Please know we will be closely following and enforcing our sick policy guidelines.*

Registration Information

Our goal is to accommodate as many families as possible. The Park District reserves the right to adjust minimums/maximums and locations based on the availability of space, staff, and enrollment in order to maintain the safety, structure, and integrity of the program.

All registrations are subject to acceptance based on program availability, proper completion of registration material, payment status, and history, and the Park District's ability to meet any special needs of the participant.

The St. Charles Park District (SCPD) follows St. Charles School District 303 (D303) age requirement guidelines. Registrants must meet the age requirement for the requested preschool class by September 1 (Threes & Pre-K) of the preschool year registered for.

Early enrollment for the following school year is available for registrants enrolled in the current school year. Registration priority is given in the following order:

1. Currently enrolled residents
2. Open resident enrollment
3. Currently enrolled non-residents
4. Open non-resident enrollment

Early Registration Forms will be distributed in February to all current school year registrants.

Payment Options

1. Pay the full activity registration fee at the time of registration.
2. Choose to have monthly payments, determined by the total number of classes, automatically withdrawn from your bank account. Monthly payment information is required at the time of registration. A \$50 initial payment per session will secure your child's place in this program. Payments will occur on the 15th of each month beginning in August and continuing through April.
 - Electronic Check Payment (ECP)
Monthly payments will be automatically debited from your checking or savings account.
 - Credit Card Authorization (CCA)
Monthly payments will be automatically charged to your credit card:
Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express.

Refund Policy

1. Refunds requested will be issued, less a \$50 withdrawal fee.
2. Refunds will be granted, less the \$50 withdrawal fee, if a valid physician's written excuse or proof of relocation out of the area are submitted. Refunds may be pro-rated based upon the remaining number of classes in the session.
3. The Park District reserves the right to review and make the final decision on all refunds
4. Should preschool be canceled for emergency situations due to unforeseen circumstances, refunds made for classes missed will be processed as a household credit to your account, in a timely manner. Payment plans may be paused for prolonged closures.

Childcare Expense Statements

Receipts can be issued upon request, as well as a Statement of Account that includes all registrations and payments to SCPD for a given period of time. A Tax ID Letter is also available. SCPD is not responsible or liable for determining childcare expenses.

Inclusion Services

Fox Valley Special Recreation Association

If your child has any special medical, physical, psychological, and/or emotional needs, please list them in detail on your registration material. Lack of information may adversely affect the Park District's ability to accommodate the needs of your child, and may necessitate that participant's removal from the program. SCPD is not responsible for any injuries, complications, damages, or losses due to withheld information. Accommodations may be made to assist your child. A two-week notification prior to the start of classes is required for all children requesting inclusion services. *Please note all special needs your child requires in your Emergency Information ePACT account and notify the Nature Programs Supervisor.*

Along with other area park districts, the St. Charles Park District works in collaboration with Fox Valley Special Recreation Association (FVSRA) to make reasonable modifications in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for any individual with a disability that registers for programming. To request modifications, please contact us at least two weeks in advance of the child's start date. For more details, call 630-513-6200.

Modifications for patrons with disabilities:

Families seeking modifications for their child should indicate this on their registration form at the time of registration, or by first contacting the Nature Programs Supervisor for St. Charles Park District. A member of the Fox Valley Special Recreation Association (FVSRA) team will follow up to facilitate an individualized assessment (intake form) with the parent/guardian. Using this information and any documentation from previous participation, an inclusion support plan will be created.

This plan can include the following modifications:

- Staff training
- Visual systems (i.e. timers, written/picture schedule, etc.)
- Adaptive equipment/supplies
- Sensory supplies (i.e. noise-canceling head phones, fidgets, etc.)
- Behavior Management support (i.e. token economy systems, positive coping tools, etc.)
- Verbal cues
- Modifications to activities
- Additional personnel (i.e. Inclusion Companions or Sign Language Interpreters)

Modified Behavior Expectations

ALL participants should be able to meet behavior expectations with or without accommodations.

Behaviors that could result in immediate dismissal from programs due to interventions requiring close proximity of staff and participant include, but are not limited to the following:

- Spitting, licking, biting
- Hitting, grabbing, kicking, wrestling
- Running from the designated program area

Preschool Teachers

We take pride in providing a quality preschool program, allowing you to feel confident in the experience your child will receive. Preschool staff hold a degree in early child education or a related field, and are certified annually in CPR/AED and First Aid. All staff are Mandated Reporters, certified through the Department of Child and Family Services.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival: Preschool participants must be walked to the building or designated outdoor area by a parent or guardian, and classroom doors will be opened at the class start time. To promote independence, children should be encouraged to hang their own jacket and backpack in their assigned location. *Write your child's first and last name on all personal belongings to ensure they are not misplaced.*

Dismissal: Pickup at the end of class will take place at your child's classroom door or designated outdoor area. Preschool participants must leave with a parent or guardian. Students and siblings are not permitted to play in the classroom at dismissal.

A Parent or Guardian must sign their child out at the end of each class.

Note: Arrival and dismissal times are busy! Please watch your child(ren) at all times. As we are housed in public buildings, many community members are here for programming other than preschool. Please help your children respect those who visit and work in our buildings.

Late Pickup Fee (per child)

If you are late picking up your child, a late fee of \$5 for the first five minutes (or any portion thereof) and \$1 for each additional minute will be charged. The Late Pickup Fee will be placed on your park district account. If late pickup becomes habitual, you will run the risk of your child being discharged from the program.

Emergency Contact & Release Form-Authorization

- Following program enrollment, a link will be sent by **ePACT Network** for parents or guardians to create a secure Emergency Information Account for each child registered. You will be asked to upload a photo of your child. We will refer to this account in emergency situations.
- Only authorized individuals listed in each participant's ePACT Account will be permitted to pick up a child.
- Authorization for release will be accepted **ONLY** from parent/guardian(s) with primary custody.
- Parents/Guardians are responsible for informing the Preschool Supervisor of any changes to primary custody, restraining orders, or any other situations or changes which may affect the participant.
- Parents/Guardians are responsible for updating ePACT Accounts and notifying the Preschool Supervisor that changes have been made.

Absentee and Late Arrival Reporting Procedures

For the safety of the children enrolled in our preschool program, we require a telephone call for any day your child will be absent or arriving late to school. If your child will not be attending, please call our Teacher Hotlines. A call is not necessary on a scheduled "No School" day.

If you are arriving to school after class has begun, please stop at the front desk OR the Nature Programs Supervisor office to be escorted to the classroom and allowed entry. Classroom doors are closed and locked during class time.

Healthy Kids Policy

- If a child seems to be running a fever or appears sick, we will request that they be picked up immediately. A child is to be fully symptom-free (including fever-free and/or vomit-free) for 24 hours before returning to the program.
- We ask that you be considerate of other children and staff by keeping your child home if they show signs of illness such as uncontrolled coughing or sneezing, runny noses (not due to allergies), diarrhea, stomach issues, or rash.
- Paramedics (9-1-1) will be called to handle serious injuries. If your child needs emergency medical care, we will accompany them and a parent/guardian must meet us at the medical facility as quickly as possible.
- If your child contracts a contagious condition (e.g., lice or pink eye) that restricts them from returning, you must inform the Nature Programs Supervisor at 630-513-4393. The staff will then post Health Alert Notices to affected participants accordingly.
- A child must receive appropriate treatment, depending on the condition, before returning to the program and may require a medical release from a physician or medical provider before returning.

Dispensing Medication Procedures

Strict policies have been established for dispensing of medication to participants. These steps must be taken if a participant is required to receive medication while in the program. This includes restrictions for cough drops, vitamins, pain relievers, and over the counter or prescription drugs.

Parents/Guardians are required to complete a *Medication Dispensing Form* via ePACT for all medications to be administered to participants by park district staff or the participant themselves.

Prescription Drugs / EpiPen-Controlled by Instructor

- Parent/Guardian will provide District staff with the child's medication in the original container with prescription label that includes patient's name, physician's name, pharmacy name, name of medication and complete dosage information. The proper dosage for the day should be sent in the original container each day.
- Medication will be stored in a secure area and at a temperature consistent with the package instructions. If the program is held outside, staff will carry the medication with their emergency kit.

Inhaler-Controlled by child for self-administration

- Medication must be in the original container with prescription label that includes patient's name, physician's name, pharmacy name, name of medication and complete dosage information.

School Closing/Program Cancellation

Emergency Closing Information will be distributed in these locations:

www.d303.org

www.emergencyclosingcenter.com

television and radio news programming

In case of inclement weather, preschool will follow St. Charles School District 303 closing guidelines. If D303 cancels classes or calls for a full “e-learning” day, preschool classes will be canceled. Inclement weather days will be prorated and not be rescheduled.

D303 Late Start days that are declared due to inclement weather will result in morning preschool classes being canceled, but afternoon preschool classes in attendance. Please check the above sites and your email for information in these cases.

If Hickory Knolls Discovery Center closes for any reason, including weather or an emergency due to unforeseen circumstances, preschool will be canceled and missed days will be prorated.

Accidents and Injuries

Preschool teachers are trained to treat minor cuts, bruises, and other simple playground injuries. In the event of a serious injury, preschool teachers will call 911 to request emergency assistance. While a teacher attends to your child, another staff member will notify a parent or guardian, and if neither can be reached, an emergency contact person.

School Attire and Personal Belongings

Have your child dressed for independence, comfort, and active play. Active exploration of the outdoors is encouraged during class time and children will be permitted to splash in mud puddles, dig in the soil, make mud pies, and play with paint. We encourage sending your child to school in clothes that can get dirty.

- Casual play clothes and close-toed shoes are required. We recommend long sleeves and pants.
- Apply sunblock and bug spray prior to arrival
- Backpacks (and extra clothing) are kept in assigned locations during school hours.
- Clearly label ALL personal belongings with your child's *first and last name*.
- Leave toys at home, where they will not be lost or broken.

Independence

An important aspect of attending preschool is the development of a child's independence. Please be sure your child practices carrying their backpack, putting on (and taking off) their own coat, and can *independently* open and close the water bottle and snack/lunch they bring each day.

Bathroom Procedures

All participants must be fully toilet-trained and are responsible for all of their own toileting needs. Children may use the bathroom at any time during the school day. Encourage your child to tell the instructor if they need to use the bathroom to avoid accidents.

- Instructors will stand outside the bathroom stall or door.
- Instructors will not wipe bottoms.
- Instructors may assist with buttons, snaps, zippers, and belts; however, please have your child dressed for *independent* success.
- Parent/Guardian will be called to come in and tend to bathroom accidents.

Safety Drills

Safety drills will be scheduled throughout the school year to prepare participants for emergency situations. Safety Drills include fire drills, tornado drills, and active threat drills.

Parent Communication

Communication is key to your child having a positive preschool experience. Each preschool classroom distributes a monthly calendar and newsletter via email containing important information regarding curriculum, special events, reminders, and general classroom news. Please be sure to check your email account frequently, and let your child's teachers know if you are not receiving information.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to email classroom teachers at the addresses below, or to leave messages on our Teacher Hotlines to receive a phone call back.

Additionally, teachers will communicate with parents via **Seesaw Class**. The Seesaw Class App is available from the *Apple App Store* or *Google Play*, and can also be accessed on your computer. Each classroom will send individual QR codes and connection instructions.

Contact Information

It's important that the Park District has accurate contact information should a parent/guardian need to be called. Notify the Nature Programs Supervisor and your classroom teachers of any changes in phone numbers, emergency contact people, or medications so our records can be updated. Be sure to update this information in your child's ePACT account as well.

Parent Survey

Each preschool year, parents are given the opportunity to participate in a survey about your child's experience in our preschool program. Your feedback is important to us and we appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts. If you have questions or concerns anytime throughout the year, feel free to contact the Nature Programs Supervisor or your child's preschool teachers.

Discipline Policy

Discipline is the ongoing process of helping children to develop inner controls and assume responsibility for their own actions. We accomplish this by setting and enforcing consistent and clear rules, limits, and consequences prior to and as part of any disciplinary action. Preschool teachers will use positive statements to redirect behavior. Children will have a reasonable opportunity to resolve their own conflicts, with adult intervention as needed.

2024-2025 Preschool Calendar

Preschool classes begin in August and follow the D303 calendar until the third week of May.

Classes are in session August 26, 2024 – May 16, 2025, with the following exceptions:

No School Days

Friday, August 30 (D303 Teacher Work Day)

Monday, September 2 (Labor Day)

Thursday, October 10 (D303 Conferences)

Friday, October 11 (D303 Conferences)

Monday, October 14 (Columbus Day)

Tuesday, November 5 (General Election Day)

Monday, November 25—Friday, November 29 (Thanksgiving Break)

Monday, December 23—Monday, January 6 (Winter Break)

Monday, January 15 (Martin Luther King Day)

Monday, February 17 (Presidents' Day)

Thursday, February 18 (D303 School Improvement Day)

Thursday, February 27 (D303 Conferences)

Friday, February 28 (Kane County Institute Day)

Monday, March 31—April 4 (Spring Break)

Friday, April 18 (D303 School Improvement Day)



FAQ's for Acorns to Oaks Preschool Program

“How can I meet my child's teachers and find out what my child will be doing in preschool?”

An Individualized *Parent Orientation* with the Nature Programs Supervisor and Preschool Teachers will take place at Hickory Knolls Discovery Center on select days in August. This orientation is for parents and their child. We will also hold an Acorns to Oaks Family Playdate on Saturday August 24th from 9:30 am-11 am.

“When does preschool begin?”

The first *full* days of school will be on Monday, August 26 (M/W/F & M-Th classes). You will be asked to hug your child at the door and let them begin this new adventure at Acorns to Oaks. We promise to take good care of them!

“What paperwork must I complete before the first day of preschool?”

✓ You will need to create (or update) an ePACT account for each child that will share important medical, allergy, and emergency contact information with us, identify authorized persons for pickup, and upload a picture of your child.

✓ Copies of your child's vaccination records and birth certificates will also need to be uploaded to your child's ePACT account

This information is stored on a secure, web-based system that our staff will have access to in case of an emergency. You will be emailed a link to the ePACT Network upon registration and must create/complete the account online.

“When is the paperwork due?”

Your ePACT account must be established online *before your child participates in our preschool program.*

“What if my child is sick or will be absent?”

Please call the Teacher Hotline to report absences.

“What should my child bring to school each day?”

Each day, your child will need:

- Backpack
- 2-pocket folder
- Snack
- Pre-filled water bottle
- A change of clothes
- Weather-appropriate outerwear
(we will go over nature preschool clothing more during parent orientation)
- A readiness to participate in new experiences!

**Please be sure ALL items are labeled with your child's first & last name.*