



MECC

Manistee Early Childhood Center

GSRP

Great Start Readiness Program

Handbook



2026

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PHILOSOPHY

At MAPS Great Start Readiness Program, we believe every child is a unique and capable learner who thrives in a nurturing, play-based environment where they feel safe, valued, and accepted. We are committed to supporting the whole child—socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically—through meaningful experiences that spark curiosity and joy in learning. We recognize families as a child’s first and most important teachers. By building strong, respectful partnerships with families, we ensure that home and school work together to create consistency, trust, and shared success. Our approach to positive guidance helps children develop self-control, problem-solving skills, and respect for themselves and others. Through encouragement, modeling, and teaching appropriate choices, children build confidence, kindness, and a strong sense of belonging. Together with families, we prepare children for lifelong learning and future success.

PROGRAM PURPOSE

It is Manistee Area Public Schools mission to provide children with a high-quality preschool program. We provide certified staff, developmentally appropriate center-based curriculum and ample opportunity for children of various backgrounds to develop to their fullest potential. We will do this so as to reduce the risk of children becoming educationally disadvantaged in the future.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

Our elementary school education program emphasizes creative and developmentally appropriate education for the whole child. This is promoted through learning experiences and activities that include purposeful play, child initiated activities, social interaction, active participation, manipulation of objects, free exploration and skill building as facilitated by the teacher.

ADMISSION POLICY

Based on PreK for All, all 4 year olds are eligible for free preschool. GSRP still requires prioritization of children at 400% FPL and below. All other children will be prioritized based on age, eligibility factors, and income. All students and parents will participate in required home visits scheduled by the teacher and family. Families must complete enrollment paperwork including the child information card and immunization records prior to enrollment. The child health appraisal form is due prior to the start of school, or within 30 days of enrollment. Failure to provide all necessary paperwork may result in your child’s exclusion from the program until all paperwork is complete. Children will not be denied enrollment or excluded from GSRP programming based on challenging behavior, developmental delays or identified disabilities (e.g., toileting needs, speech, motor function, aggressive behaviors, and cognitive delays.)

When all GSRP funded classroom openings are filled, each ISD must establish and maintain a waiting list of eligible children seeking placement when a space becomes available in a classroom. Eligibility of children on the waiting list must be verified and prioritization for possible enrollment determined. Children on the waiting list are enrolled as space becomes available.

FEE POLICY

Our program is fully funded by the state of Michigan. GSRP is free to all eligible children who meet income guidelines of up to 400 FPL% and eligibility factors.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance in the GSRP/MAPS program is important to the learning process. Attending school regularly allows children to fully participate in classroom activities, develop peer relationships and a foundation for strong school habits. Research shows that frequent absence seriously affects learning and may affect future work habits. When your child is going to be out of school because of illness or any other reasons, PLEASE LET THE TEACHER KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SO THAT WE KNOW YOUR CHILD IS SAFE. Excessive tardiness and unexcused absences are discouraged and may result in working with the family on creating an Attendance Success Plan.

The following are tips on ways to ensure regular attendance:

- Create a consistent, predictable morning routine and drop-off at school. The drop-off could include a ritual (1 hug/2 kisses) , a mantra, a secret handshake, etc.
- Schedule all doctor/dental and all other appointments during non-school hours, when possible.
- Create a regular wake-up and bedtime routine allowing for 10-13 hours of sleep in a 24 hour period.
- Give your child time to adjust to the new school routine.

If attendance continues to be a concern, the teacher and an administrator will reach out to parents/guardians to discuss the importance of regular attendance and to work together on solutions to help the child attend consistently. The goal of these

conversations is to provide support, identify barriers, and collaborate with families so the child can fully benefit from the program.

However, if attendance concerns persist and efforts to resolve them are not successful, a meeting will be held with the family, teacher, and administrator to determine next steps. In some cases, and only with agreement from all parties involved, a child may be unenrolled from the program and placed back on the waitlist to allow a waitlisted child the opportunity to attend and benefit from GSRP.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Any student moving outside the district or whose parent has decided to remove them from the program must let the school know as soon as they are aware of the change. This will ensure that the whereabouts and the safety of the child are known and that any students waiting to

enroll may be notified in a timely manner. The parent or guardian of the child must notify the GSRP teacher two weeks prior to leaving the program and the reason for withdrawal.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe learning and work environment. Unfortunately, natural and manmade disasters do occur. Such emergencies are best met by preparedness and planning.

The Board directs that a system of emergency preparedness be developed that addresses the following goals and/or objectives:

- A. The health and safety of students and staff are safeguarded;
- B. The time necessary for instructional purposes is not unduly diverted;
- C. Minimum disruption to the educational program occurs;
- D. Students are helped to learn self-reliance and trained to respond sensibly to emergency situations.

All threats to the safety of District facilities shall be identified by appropriate personnel and responded to promptly in accordance with the plan for emergency preparedness.

Our school will practice safety and emergency drills as required by law. The Superintendent shall develop administrative guidelines for the handling of emergency situations. Parents will be notified by the MAPS phone system if any emergency shall occur, along with plans on how children will be released.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Listen to local television and radio stations for information on delays and cancellations. In order to meet required minimum hours of teacher contract time for the program, the school calendar may need to be adjusted from time to time. You will be notified in advance if this becomes a concern. If for any reason school must be dismissed early, you will be contacted personally. Information on the inclement weather/emergency transportation form will be used to get your child to the proper place.

APPROPRIATE DRESS

It is recommended that all children in the program dress comfortably. Please dress your child according to current weather conditions. Children will have outdoor play every day, unless there is rain. In the winter, the children will play in the snow. An extra change of clothes to keep at school or in the backpack is highly recommended. Please include underwear and socks along with other clothing items in the event of a toileting accident or spill. Extra dry mittens are always good to have available. Shoes with open toes are not allowed on the playground.

ANNUAL SCHEDULE

The district distributes an annual schedule the first week of school that includes any days off from school or holidays, teacher in-service and parent/teacher conference dates (see attached calendar). The GSRP teacher and associate teacher are required to have two home visits and

two conferences with each student and their parent (s) or guardian. The GSRP program will be in session, a minimum of 120 days/30 weeks.

MONTHLY SCHEDULE

Creative Curriculum will be a vehicle for meeting district and state objectives in a fun hands-on way. Supporting the Creative Curriculum will be studies. Studies will vary from month to month. Activities and events will be mentioned in our weekly newsletter. Manipulatives and learning tools will be rotated monthly and special items will be used which will support the development of the class theme. Snack and lunch menus will be made available to each family. A snack and lunch menu will be posted in the classroom and at the classroom information center.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

The program operates from Monday through Thursday. Class meets full days according to the following schedule: Monday - 9am-3pm, Tuesday-Thursday - 8am-3pm. Evenings and Fridays will be set aside for home-visits, parent involvement, and staff planning or development.

GSRP DAILY SCHEDULE

7:50-8:20 Arrival/Greeting Time/Gym

Teachers greet students off of the bus and directly from parents/guardians. Children enter the gym and place their belongings along the wall. The children participate in large motor activities choosing from the materials provided. Group games are also offered to encourage and develop cooperative play between peers.

8:20-8:45 Wash Hands/Breakfast & Planning Time

Family-Style meals support children doing things for themselves (e.g., serve themselves, pour beverages, distribute napkins, wipe up spills). Children choose whether to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat. Adults eat and have meaningful conversations with the children. Children are encouraged to clean their own snack space including disposal of leftovers, wiping of tables, and pushing in their own chairs.

Planning Time - Children indicate their plans to adults in a place where intimate conversations can occur and where people and materials are visible. Adults use a range of strategies to support children's planning (e.g., props, area signs, tape recorders, singing, planning individually, in pairs, in small groups).

8:45-10:00 Free Choice/Clean up

Free Choice (children's hour of uninterrupted Choice Time) – Children always initiate activities and carry out their intentions. Children make many choices about where and how to use materials. During Work Time, adults participate as partners in child-initiated play and encourage children's problem solving both with materials and during times of social conflict.

Cleanup Time – Children and adults clean up together keeping the spirit of play and problem solving alive. Children make many choices during clean up. Adults accept children's level of involvement and skill while supporting their learning.

Recall Time

Children choose Free Choice Time experiences to reflect on, talk about, and exhibit. Adults provide a variety of materials and strategies to maintain interest as they follow children's lead and encourage children to share (e.g., individual props such as puppets, telephones or periscopes, group games using a hula hoop, ball or spinner, re-enacting, drawing, showing and describing a structure or painting).

10:00-10:30 Large Group

All adults and children participate in activities planned around children's interests, developmental levels, music and movement, cooperative play and projects; and events meaningful to children.

10:30-11:30 Outside Time

Children have many choices about how they play in the outdoor learning environment, much as they do during Work Time indoors. Adults supervise children for safety and also join in their active outdoor play, supporting their initiatives and problem solving.

11:30-12:15 Bathroom/Wash hands/Lunch

Children assist in preparation and setup and are encouraged to serve themselves.

Family-Style meals support children doing things for themselves (e.g., serve themselves, pour beverages, distribute napkins, wipe up spills). Children choose whether to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat. Adults eat and have meaningful conversations with the children. Children are encouraged to clean their own space including disposal of leftovers, wiping of tables, and pushing in their own chairs.

12:15-1:00 Quiet/Rest Time/Wake Up/Clean Up

Resting is a time for sleeping or quiet, solitary, on-your-own-cot play. Rest Time plans should be individualized to meet the needs of each child. Quiet play could include books, soft music, or fine motor manipulatives.

1:00-1:15 Small Group

An adult-initiated learning experience based on children's interests and development where children explore, play, work with materials, and talk about what they are doing with the materials.

1:15-1:30 Music and Movement

All adults and children participate in activities planned around children's interests, developmental levels, music and movement, cooperative play and projects; and events meaningful to children.

1:30-2:00 Snack & Planning Time

Adults and children work together to set up for snack. Children are encouraged to clean their own snack space including disposal of leftovers, wiping of tables, and pushing in their own chairs. Children indicate their plans to adults in a place where intimate conversations can occur and where people and materials are visible. Adults use a range of strategies to support children's planning (e.g., props, area signs, tape recorders, singing, planning individually, in pairs, in small groups).

2:00-3:00 Outside Free Choice Time/Dismissal

(refer to AM descriptions).

REST TIME POLICY

Children will be given an opportunity to rest each day in the afternoon following lunch for children to rest. Quiet time is mandated by Child Care Licensing and states that children in care for more than five (5) hours will be provided an opportunity to have quiet time. Each child is provided a cot that is sanitized daily. During rest time, children are provided with 30 minutes of quiet time with soft music and limited lighting to allow them to relax. Some children may want to have their backs rubbed to help them relax; teachers will offer to rub backs. After 30 minutes, children who are not sleeping will be allowed to enter into quiet activities while the others are sleeping. Sleeping children will be allowed to wake at their own pace and join the afternoon activities.

FREE CHOICE CENTERS

Free choice time will allow the children to explore mathematics, science and social studies themes, dramatic play, blocks, construction, puzzles and games, puppets, gross-motor and art manipulatives and materials that practice language and literacy skills.

GOALS: CREATIVE CURRICULUM

The most important goals of our preschool curriculum are for children to get along well with others and become enthusiastic learners. We want children to become independent, self-confident, curious learners who can work well with others. We're teaching them how to learn, not just in preschool, but all through their lives. We do this by creating purposeful and productive play experiences that help children grow in all areas. Creative Curriculum utilizes the study approach which allows for deep, first hand exploration of topics that are relevant and interest children, offering myriad ways to learn about each topic. Children raise questions about the topic, and through exploration and discovery, they find answers to their questions.

- **Social/emotional:** to help children develop independence, self-confidence, and self-control, follow rules and routines, make friends, and learn what it means to be part of a group.
- **Physical:** to increase children's large muscle skills- balancing, running, jumping, throwing and catching- and use of small muscles in their hands to do tasks like buttoning, stringing beads, cutting, drawing, and writing.

- **Cognitive:** to acquire thinking skills such as the ability to solve problems, to ask questions, and to think logically-sorting, classifying, comparing, counting, and making patterns- and to use materials and their imagination to show what they have learned.
- **Language:** to use words to communicate with others, listen to and participate in conversations with others, understand the purpose of print, recognize letters and words, and begin writing for purpose.
- **Literacy:** to develop concepts of print, phonological awareness, oral language, letter-sound knowledge, comprehension and writing.
- **Mathematics:** to help develop number sense, children count and quantify, explore and describe spatial relationships and create simple and complex patterns.
- **Science:** to develop science inquiry skills, characteristics of living things, physical properties of objects and materials, knowledge of the earth's environment and uses tools and other technology to perform tasks by being a scientist as they play.
- **Social Studies:** children develop knowledge about themselves, the people and places around them, basic geographic knowledge and how to take care of the environment.
- **The Arts:** children love to draw, paint, cut and paste, and mold playdough. They also enjoy moving to and making music and pretending. They love these activities because they are fun and satisfying. The arts give children different ways to express what they know and feel and gain understanding. This is why it is so important for children to create their own works of art, sing songs, move to music and pretend.

Through the activities we plan and the way we organize the classroom, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with children, we seek to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give your child a successful start in school.

Evaluation: Progress Reports will be given a minimum of three times a year.

Screenings, Observations, and Developmental Assessments

The program is required to individualize instruction for each child. This process supports children's strengths, needs and overall development. The teachers implement the Ages and Stages Questionnaire(ASQ) as a screener and assess each student with The Teaching Strategies GOLD tool three times a year—in November, February, and May. Results are shared with families during conferences and home visits and are used to guide weekly lesson planning. A parent will be notified with a phone call and in writing if there is a need to have an ISD staff observe/evaluate their child. Each GSRP classroom is evaluated by the Wexford Missaukee and Manistee Intermediate School District using the CLASS Assessment Tool, which is a state mandated assessment to ensure program Quality.

PARENT NOTICE OF PROGRAM MEASUREMENT

Manistee Area GSRP Classrooms are required to work with the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential(MiLeap) to measure the effect of the state-wide Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). Information is sometimes collected about GSRP staff, enrolled children, and their families. Program staff or representative from MDE might:

- Ask parents questions about their child and family.

- Observe children in the classroom.
- Measure what children know about letters, words, and numbers, etc.
- Ask teachers how children are learning and growing.

Information from you, and about your child, will not be shared with others in any way that you or your child could be identified. It is protected by law.

Questions? Please Contact:

- Manistee Area GSRP Programs, Amy Brown, GSRP Lead Teacher at 231-398-3757
- The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education Advancement and Potential(MiLEAP), Office of Great Start, Early Childhood Education and Family Services, at
 - mileap@michigan.gov
 - 517-241-7004 or
 - MiLeap, 105 W. Allegan Street, Lansing, MI 48933.

REFERRAL POLICY

Tier 1 Services

Foundation – 80% of the children fall into this category - Teaching staff will work with their Early Childhood Specialist to ensure foundational pieces are in place and being implemented with fidelity. Developmental screening is intended to identify children who may need further evaluation to determine if they have a challenging behavior, developmental or health risk that will impede school success. When a child scores in the “Refer” or “Rescreen” category on the ASQ, further information about the child’s performance is required. These children will be re-screened 8-10 weeks after the initial screening. When it has been decided that a challenging behavior, developmental or health risk still exists then the Teaching staff, parent and Program Director will decide the next steps to take in Tier 2.

Tier 2 Services

Intentional/Individualized Instruction – 15% of the children fall into this category. The Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Consultant, Teaching staff, and parents will write an Individualized Action Plan (IAP) with next step actions for the individual child that needs more intentional support. On the IAP, timelines will be stated and who will follow through on each task. A copy of the IAP will be sent to the Teacher and Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Consultant . If the IAP plan has been implemented with fidelity and the challenging behavior, developmental or health risk continues then the Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Consultant, Teaching staff and parent(s) will decide the next steps to take in Tier 3.

Meeting each child’s educational needs – A behavior strategy can take 6-8 weeks for change to happen and when you take a behavior away from a child you have to replace it with another behavior that is productive within the classroom environment.

Tier 3 Services

Request for Service – 5% of the children fall into this category - analysis of data from Tier II interventions and lack of response to those interventions will merit a referral for special education evaluation.

FAMILY SUPPORT & REFERRALS

GSRP is committed to supporting the whole child by addressing not only educational needs but also the overall well-being of each family. When needs are identified, GSRP staff will connect families with appropriate community resources and services, including but not limited to medical care, mental health support, food assistance, clothing, and housing.

Staff will follow up with families to ensure connections have been made and to offer additional support as needed. These efforts are carried out in partnership with families, while honoring their confidentiality, dignity, and unique circumstances.

The Manistee ISD is an affiliate of *Help Me Grow (HMG) Michigan*. All families enrolled in GSRP county-wide have access to Help Me Grow services, which provide a single point of access to local community resources. Whether a parent has a concern about their child's development or simply wants more information about growth and learning, Help Me Grow can assist.

For more information, visit www.helpmegrow-mi.org and click on your county to get started.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parent involvement strengthens learning at home and is directly linked to positive child outcomes at school. Families play an essential role in GSRP and are asked to participate in the following ways:

- **Two home visits** - Scheduled prior to the start of school and at the end of the year lasting at least 45 minutes each.
- **Two family conferences** - Conferences are held in the fall and spring, and when requested by families and lasting at least 30 minutes each.
- **Progress reporting** throughout the year
- **Two parent activities** (examples include *Breakfast with Buddies*, *Cupcakes with Caregivers*, or *Talking is Teaching* events)

In addition, GSRP provides opportunities for ongoing and meaningful parent participation through the **Family Participation Group**, which meets at least twice each program year. This group encourages parent input on recruitment and enrollment, program evaluation results, and child outcome data. The local GSRP parent advisory committee designates a liaison to the GSC Parent Coalition to work with other committed parents to support early childhood practices in the community. The GSC is a devoted group, willing to take on leadership roles in the community, advocate for children and provide input to the Great Start Collaborative. Families are also invited and encouraged to attend the Manistee ISD wide Family Participation Group three times per year (late fall, early spring, and end of the school year) to learn about the program as a

whole and provide their input for program improvement. Flyers will be shared with families with details for each meeting in advance.

TRANSITION PLAN: ACTIVITIES FROM GSRP TO KINDERGARTEN

The transition to kindergarten is an important developmental milestone for young children, their families, and teachers. To assist with the transition, GSRP provides parents with Kindergarten Registration and Open House information. In the classroom, the teachers plan a two-week “Getting Ready Kindergarten” study to support the transition to kindergarten. During the study, the children engage in discussions and activities that help them say good-bye to the familiarity of their classrooms and routines and look forward to moving on to kindergarten. These activities include, but are not limited to, adding a Kindergarten Teachers book to the library, setting up the dramatic play as a school cafeteria, and putting school props in the block area. In the final week of preschool, the teachers arrange a visit to one of the kindergarten classrooms to experience a typical day in kindergarten. Following the visit, the children play on the elementary playground.

At the end of the year, or when a child exits the program, MAPS GSRP prepares a packet for each transitioning child. The packet includes, Teaching Strategies Gold reports, photos of students engaged in fine motor activities and the Early Childhood Transition form.

PROTECTIVE POLICY/CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY

Child abuse and neglect are against the law. The staff members at MAPS are mandated by law to report all actual and suspected child abuse or neglect to the Michigan Department of Human Services within 24 hours.

Reporting Requirements:

Staff “who have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect shall make immediately, by telephone or otherwise, an oral report, or cause an oral report to be made, of the suspected child abuse or neglect to the Michigan Department of Human Service. Within 72 hours after making the oral report, the reporting person shall file a written report as required in this act.” *State of Michigan Department of Human Services, Child Protection Law, Act No. 238, rev. 8-06.* The reporting person shall make a copy of the written report, DHS-3200, available to their supervisor and subsequent administrators. Reporting the situation to administration or supervisor does not relieve the staff member of the mandated responsibility to report.

HEALTH CARE POLICY

Physical Forms and Immunization Records must be collected prior to your child starting GSRP.

Any illness which needs to be reported to the Health Department is done so by first reporting it to the school administrative assistant who completes the appropriate form and forwards it to the Health Department. Our Health Department offers clinics for our students and parents seeking medical care or treatment. The Health Department number is (231)723-3595.

Hand Washing:

All staff, students and volunteers are required to wash their hands after using the bathroom, before and after eating, serving snack, after coming in from outside, and after participating in specific activities that will require hand washing. Our staff will wear protective gloves while caring for injuries and illnesses.

Bodily Fluids:

Bodily fluids are also handled with protective gloves and caution. All surfaces, equipment, and materials are sanitized on a regular basis in order to control illness and infection.

Blood Borne Pathogens:

All staff are required to participate in and pass a certification of the Bloodborne Pathogens training before unsupervised contact with children. Emergency procedures as well as CPR and First Aid will be reviewed annually by all staff.

Sanitizing Equipment:

All tableware, utensils, food contact surfaces and food service equipment shall be thoroughly washed, rinsed and sanitized after each use with an approved sanitizing solution. Children's toys and equipment will be sanitized regularly to adhere to Child Care Licensing Rules and Regulations.

Medication Policy

All medication administered by GSRP staff must be prescribed by the child's physician. Parents are required to complete a medication form that includes the name of the medication, dosage, and times it should be given. Staff will document each time medication is administered and ensure that all medications are stored safely and securely, out of children's reach.

Please note: over-the-counter medications will only be given if prescribed by a physician.

Illness Policy:

Criteria for excluding **volunteers, staff & children** from the program:

1. The child's temperature is 100.4 or higher; the child must be dismissed until he/she has been fever free for 24 hours WITHOUT medication.
2. Vomiting, the child must be clear of vomiting for 24 hours
3. Mouth sores, until a physician determines it is noninfectious, note from the physician.
4. Rash with fever, until the physician determines it is noninfectious, note from the physician.
5. Impetigo, 24 hours after treatment, note from the physician.
6. Pink eye, 24 hours after treatments began, note from the physician.
7. Tuberculosis, until a written statement from the physician stating the child is noninfectious.
8. Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment began, not from the physician.

Criteria for excluding children from the program:

1. Chicken Pox, until 6 days after the rash appears.
2. Mumps, until 9 days after the onset of the gland swelling.
3. Hepatitis A, until the health department has determined it is noninfectious.
4. Measles, until 6 days after the rash appears.
5. Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
6. Head Lice or Scabies, until 24 hours after the treatment has begun and GSRP staff has verified there are no more lice, nits or scabies.
7. Severe coughing, until 24 hours after the treatment has begun.

PARENT NOTIFICATION PLAN

Notification will occur at pick up time for minor injuries, incidents such as a minor scrape on the knee may only require staff to apply first aid, complete an incident report, and notify parents at pick up time verbally and provide a written injury report.

Notification will occur immediately via telephone call to parents for serious injuries/incidents. If unable to reach the parent the emergency contact person will be contacted immediately for more serious injuries, illnesses or incidents such as but not limited to head injuries of any kind, injuries requiring medical attention, allergic reactions/rashes, seizures, asthma attacks, unconscious child, fever, vomiting child, or incidents involving lost children, physical discipline of a child by a staff member/volunteer, alleged sexual contact between children or between a child and staff/volunteer, etc.

Parents or emergency contacts are expected to pick their child up within one hour from the time you receive a call from the GSRP staff or the school office secretary about your child's illness.

NUTRITION POLICY

GSRP is a participant of Michigan's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). We implement their guidelines for good nutrition. Monthly calendars will be sent home and posted in the classroom. Children attending the program will receive school breakfast (8:00am), lunch (11:25am) and afternoon snack (2:00pm). We will comply with rule 400.8330(3) to ensure children with special dietary needs receive meals/snacks in accordance with the child's needs. A child will not be deprived of a meal/snack if the parent fails to provide it. They will still be given the opportunity to eat hot lunch/snack daily. If a family chooses not to use the food services for their child, then home provided meals must meet CACFP/NSLP guidelines.

Food Service/Meal Plan

Great Start Readiness Programs understand that a child needs to learn self-care and self-help skills. In order to facilitate that, meals and snacks will be served family style in seating that is appropriate for small children. Children are encouraged to try new foods and serve themselves. They will learn social skills as well; like sharing, and passing food to each other at the table. Menus are sent home for breakfast, snack and lunch. If your child has allergies, please notify the teacher during registration and bring in documentation from the doctor stating the allergy.

We will accommodate all allergies or religious preferences in the meals and snacks as stated above.

LICENSING NOTEBOOK

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services licensing notebook contains all of the center's licensing inspection and special investigation reports and related corrective action plans. Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from at least the past 2 years are available on the child care licensing website at

<https://www.michigan.gov/mileap/early-childhood-education/cclb/cchirp>

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

In accordance with the federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write:

USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20525-2094
Or call: 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD)

USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The Manistee Area Public Schools Board of Education gives its representatives the right and responsibility to maintain disciplinary measures and to protect the rights of individuals to learn, as well as to ensure proper operation of the school.

The Manistee GSRP Schools implement Conscious Discipline (see examples below). Discipline is age appropriate and typically at this age most discipline dilemmas are minor and can be handled in the classroom setting. Any problem that is unable to be resolved in the classroom will require parent involvement. The school reserves the right to establish other rules not listed here as the need arises. For example, teachers may establish classroom rules. We will guide children's social and emotional development, including making friends and learning how to solve conflicts. No Child will be excluded due to developmental needs, medical or behavioral support, toileting or staff attitudes/apprehensions, short term injury or contagious illnesses. "Children will not be denied enrollment or excluded from GSRP programming based on challenging behavior, developmental delays or identified disabilities (e.g., toileting needs, speech, motor function, aggressive behaviors, and cognitive delays)." to your enrollment policy.

CHOICES

Throughout the school day, children are recognized and encouraged to make good choices. Choices within limits allow a child to feel empowered and feel part of a decision-making

process. The more choices a child has, the more likely he or she will cooperate with adults. Children are offered choices in school whenever possible.

PREVENTION

Teachers will interact and play with students during power of choice time and model appropriate behavior. During “structured” times, children will be offered choices within limits whenever possible (examples: Would you like to sit in a chair or stand at the table? Would you like to pick up the blocks or the trucks?)

INTERVENTION

Conflict can occur when a child is trying to assert control over a situation. Teachers diffuse conflict by using enforceable statements (examples: You may play in the gym after you put the trucks away. We will walk to the gym when our voices are quiet). When children are experiencing a conflict, the teacher will approach the children calmly and acknowledge feelings (you are feeling really angry). Next the teacher will gather information from the children and find out why there is a conflict (what happened?). The teacher will help each child use empowering words and problem solving strategies to resolve the conflict (Ask your friend, “Can I use this truck?” Tell your friend, “I am using this truck right now. I give it to you when I am done.”)

REDIRECTION

When a conflict has been resolved, the child will be redirected with new choices (example: Would you like to play in the sand or with play dough?)

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

Sometimes children make choices that have consequences. Children who experience logical, natural consequences learn that they are in charge of their own destiny. Consequences are met with calmness and empathy for that child. (example: This is sad. Remember I asked you not to throw sand? Throwing sand hurts my friend's eyes. You may choose to play in the play dough or blocks. You may play in the sand tomorrow.)

SAFE PLACE

The Safe Place is a designated quiet area in the classroom. Children are encouraged to go to the Safe Spot on their own when they need time away. The child may rejoin the group when he/she is calm and ready. **Program staff is prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment (i.e. spanking, threatening, humiliating, etc.)**

OUTDOOR WEATHER & PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Beginning at birth, children’s bodies are growing every day, in every way. Being physically active improves overall health. When children’s bodies exercise they feel good!

Physical activity also helps children:

- Stay at a healthy weight
- Reduce their risk of feeling stressed or depressed and developing obesity-related illnesses (type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and unhealthy cholesterol levels).
- Build their strength, flexibility and endurance
- Enhance their motor skills, social skills, and brain development
- Develop and maintain strong bones
- Sleep better
- Feel confident about themselves and their bodies as they grow

Everyday the children will go outside unless the temperature is below 5 degrees (factoring windchill.) Children will be using the school playgrounds. For the safety of the children, they will only use equipment that has been approved for preschool aged children by the playground inspector and safety guidelines. Playgrounds are regularly inspected with documentation per Child Care Licensing Rules.

BUSING

Transportation, if needed, is furnished through Deans Transportation busing. Students may also utilize Dial-a-Ride services, but must be arranged by the parent/guardian.

The Pick-My-Kid app will be used to help facilitate daily transportation needs between families and school.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITY: TO MEET STATE LAW, parents/adult must accompany their child to the bus and physically help the child up the steps. Parents/adults must meet the bus when the child returns home and physically help them off the bus.

Bus Rules:

Stay in your seat.

Have a quiet voice.

Have kind hands.

Listen to and follow directions given by the bus driver.

Discuss these safety rules with your child and talk about why they are important.

IF YOU PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION, please do not drop your child off before school starting times. Teachers may not be in the room or building thus creating an unsafe situation for your child. Only the person listed on the Child Information Card will be allowed to pick the child. If the person is not on the list, a note needs to be sent in with the parent's signature to add the new person.

FOR SAFETY REASONS, please bring your child into the building or onto the playground, making a staff member aware of his/her arrival. **Do not drop your child off at the curb or school door!**

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY: The program staff will meet the bus and physically help the children off the bus. At the end of the session, staff will take the children to the bus and physically help them up the steps.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips might be taken throughout the year. Parents will grant permission, in advance, on a form provided. Parents will receive advance notice of any trip to be taken, indicating destination, date and time.

CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS

Visits by parents are always welcomed and encouraged.

For the safety of all our children:

All parents are welcome to visit and be involved in the advancement of your child's experiences under the supervision of the teacher and associate teacher. All supervised volunteers shall receive a public sex offender registry (PSOR) clearance and a background check through ICHAT before having any contact with a child in care. The volunteer's name and birthdate will be submitted to Central Office. Once cleared, volunteers will be able to assist in the classroom and on field trips with students, if scheduled with the teacher in advance. Documentation shall be on file that a volunteer has not been convicted of:

- Child abuse or child neglect
- A sex crime
- A felony involving harm or threatened harm to an individual within the 10 years immediately preceding the date of offering to volunteer at the center. If not cleared, a volunteer can still attend school programs that their child is involved in.

Possible opportunities for you to volunteer in the classroom: reading a story, laminate, filling glue bottles, working one on one with a child during free choice time, a cooking opportunity, outdoor time, field trips, parent skill (ie. magician, pottery, art, hairdresser).

Possible opportunities for you to volunteer from home: cutting out activities, making playdough, etc.

RELEASING CHILDREN

For your child's protection, adults will be asked to show a picture ID if they are not known to the staff. People allowed to pick up your child must be on the child's information card for us to release the child to that person. If you have made arrangements with another person to pick your child up, please inform the teacher so that person's name can be added to the child information card. GSRP is required to release the child to either parent unless a court order, divorce decree or other legal documentation to prevent an unauthorized pick-up by the non-custodial parent. Documentation must be kept in the child's file and kept current at all times. This will be kept confidential and strictly enforced by the GSRP and office staff.

If GSRP or office staff is uncomfortable in releasing a child to a parent who seems incapacitated due to drugs or alcohol use, we will offer to:

1. Keep the child in our care for an extended period of time.
2. Call the adult(s) on the child's emergency form.
3. If the adult refuses these offers, we may call the police for the child's safety.

Parents : Please refrain from using your cell phone in the building when picking up or dropping off your child. This time is extremely important for sharing information about your child. Thank you.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

It is the policy of Great Start Readiness Program that the following grievance steps be followed by parents or other community members who have complaints about the program, services and/or staff:

1. Parents shall discuss any concerns with local program staff. Call your teacher if you have problems regarding Education, Food Services, Nutrition, or concerns regarding special needs.
2. If the issue is not resolved, contact MECC Principal for concerns regarding your child. 1309 Madison Rd Manistee, MI 49660 phone: 231-723-9285
3. If the issue is still not resolved, the parents should explain the problem in writing and or call the Superintendent for Manistee Area Public Schools Central Office at 550 Maple Street Manistee, MI 49660 phone: 231-723-3251
4. If the issue persists, the parents should contact GSRP Early Childhood Director, Paris Philo, who is located at the Wexford Missaukee Intermediate School District at 9907 East 13th Street, Cadillac, Michigan, 49601, (231)510-4529.
5. If the parents feel that the issue is not being resolved by the above personnel, contact Wexford Missaukee Intermediate School District Superintendent (231) 876-2275.
6. If all other attempts fail to resolve the issue call the MiLeap Consultant, Mischele McManus, (517) 373-8664 mcmanusm@michigan.gov

SPECIAL NEEDS STATEMENT

GSRP recognizes the right of each individual child, including those with special needs, to an appropriate quality experience, which combines care and learning through play and education. We are sensitive to the needs and feelings of all children and their families and will ensure individual needs are recognized and addressed. Parents and teachers will be involved at every stage and in any plans that are made to meet a child's individual special needs.

NON-BIAS/MULTICULTURAL

Our philosophy includes giving children a broad perspective of their world. We try to include multicultural experiences as part of our everyday plan. We seek to recognize, appreciate, and respect the uniqueness of each child and to reduce stereotyping and eliminate bias on the basis of sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, and physical disability. Teaching children to tolerate the diversity of all cultures is part of our goals for the children in our program. Staff recognize the importance of incorporating children's home language in our daily programming. Our goal is to support children's home language to encourage a positive self-image and stay connected to their culture. Staff will use greetings or phrases daily from the home language of the children. To help children express their individual thoughts, needs, dislikes and approvals, non-verbal forms of communication will be used with children, ie. hand gestures, facial expressions, raised eyebrows, verbal clicks, etc..

CELEBRATIONS POLICY

Families in our programs have many different religions, cultures, and beliefs. We believe that holiday traditions are family events which are celebrated differently from home to home. MAPS GSRP believes that the classroom should function as a calming counterpoint to the stress on children and families promoted through commercialization and media pressure to buy gifts,

foods, and costumes during the holiday seasons. Therefore, our programs will not celebrate religious, cultural, or commercial holidays. We will not design events that exclude any child or family or discriminate against any family's beliefs, values, or customs. We encourage and support families in celebrating their own holiday and other traditions at home with their children.

CUSTODY ORDER PROCEDURE

Following is our procedure for dealing with custody issues. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. We want to ensure that all parents' rights are respected.

- Unless we have court-certified papers stating otherwise, a parent or legal guardian has the right to visit the child regardless of whether or not the parent/legal guardian is listed on the Child Information Record.
- Unless we have court-certified papers stating otherwise, a parent or legal guardian has the right to education records/information of the child.
- A parent must provide one or more of the following to be kept on file:
 - Birth Certificate
 - Affidavit of Parentage
 - Order of Filiation
 - Custody Section of Divorce Judgment signed by the judge
 - Custody Order
 - Order of Adoption
 - Guardian Order
 - Letter from Foster Care Agency
- Each parent who will pick up the child or have the child taken to their home must complete a Child Information Record naming the emergency contacts.
- If it is your day to pick up the child or have the child taken to your home, it is your responsibility to be there on time.
- It is your responsibility to provide the program with the most recent written documentation that will be followed to the letter. We will not honor parent requests that violate the custody order or other legal documents regarding parental status.
- Any and all changes must be in writing.
- Great Start Readiness Program/Manistee Area Public Schools is not used for supervised visitation.
- Parents must always conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.

Thank you for your cooperation. Working together, we can provide the best learning opportunity for your child.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

It is the policy of the Board of Education that when the District receives in trust from a public agency information identified to be confidential or exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, Common Law, Privilege Case Law, or Federal Law, the Board will maintain the confidentiality of said information to the maximum extent permitted by the law.

Further, employees must not divulge confidential information contained in any records, files, and/or video recordings of this Board, except to other employees who may need such information in connection with their duties and to authorize parties in accordance with proper departmental procedures.

Neither the Board nor its employees shall permit the release of the social security number of an employee, student, or other individual except as authorized by law (see AG [8350](#)). Documents containing social security numbers shall be restricted to those employees who have a need to know that information or a need to access those documents. When documents containing social security numbers are no longer needed, they shall be shredded by an employee who has authorized access to such records.

Freedom of Information Act requests shall only be responded to in accordance with the District's Policy.

If an employee is approached to provide information inappropriately, the employee must refuse to release the requested information in accordance with applicable procedures, and should refer the requestor to the employee's immediate supervisor. Any employee who inappropriately releases information, or uses confidential information for personal reasons, will be disciplined in accordance with established policies and procedures.

In order to prohibit the unauthorized disclosure of information identified as confidential by a sending public agency, the Board may seek to obtain court protection by:

- A. denying requests for release of such information absent subpoena or court order;
- B. pursuing motions to quash protective orders to prohibit unauthorized disclosure.

When possible, the Board will attempt to notify the sending public agency of the request for release of such information prior to complying with the request.

Employees who intentionally violate this policy are subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.

The Superintendent shall assure that employees receive a copy of and have readily available access to this policy.

Freedom of Information Act 1976, paragraph 15.243 et seq.M.C.L.A. 445.83, 445.84

PARENT CONFIDENTIALITY

As part of your involvement in the GSRP program, you may learn information about children and families through classroom participation, parent groups, school events, or volunteer opportunities. It is essential that all parents and family members respect the privacy of others by keeping this information confidential.

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, a child's behavior, developmental progress, family circumstances, or any personal details shared by staff or other families. This information should not be discussed outside of the school setting or shared with individuals who are not directly involved in the program.

Maintaining confidentiality protects the dignity and trust of every child and family. By following this policy, we create a safe, supportive, and respectful environment where all families feel comfortable and valued.

GSRP STAFF SCREENING PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

The Manistee Area Public Schools Board of Education recognizes that it is vital to the successful operation of the district that positions created by the board be filled with qualified and competent staff. Employees are subject to the terms of the Master Contract Agreement and shall abide by all board policies and district guidelines. All staff are required to:

- Meet all MAPS and State of Michigan License Requirements
- Be highly qualified/submit actual transcripts
- Complete an application for employment
- Child Care Background Check(CCBC) - fingerprinting & DHS central registry clearance
- Physician check up
- Staff cannot be present in the schools with a felony conviction of harm or threatened harm or conviction of child abuse or neglect.

Staffing Plan:

Per Great Start Readiness Program requirements, we will have an adult to student ratio of 1 adult per every 8 children. In classrooms that have 18 children, there will be 3 adults.

STAFF CERTIFICATION

GSRP #1

- Lead Teacher - *Amy Brown*, BA Early Childhood, Michigan State University
- Associate Teacher - *Brenda Struble*, CDA(Child Development Associate), credential from West Shore Community College.

GSRP #2

- Lead Teacher - *Renee Turmel*, CDA (Child Development Associate) credential & an associates degree in early childhood education. Renee is working towards a bachelor's degree in early childhood with an expected graduation date of 2027.
- Associate teacher - *Nancy Zatarga*, CDA (Child Development Associate) credential

All GSRP staff are CPR and First Aid certified and receive over 24 hours of training annually.

CONTACT NUMBERS

The following numbers will allow you to contact the school and teachers in the program.

Amy Brown, Lead Teacher(231) 398-3757

Renee Turmel, Lead Teacher (231) 398-3753

If you have discussed an issue with the teacher and felt that your concern was not addressed, please call the Building Principal (231) 723-9285.

Items in the Staff and Parent Guidelines are subject to change due to state and federal policies/mandates. Written notification of changes will be provided to parents and will supersede this handbook.

Acknowledgement

I have read and understand the MECC Great Start to Readiness Program Handbook (GSRP) and agree to the following:

Follow policies in the MECC handbooks

Ensure health forms and immunizations are up-to-date

Permit staff to act in the best interest of my child's health and safety

***Items in the Staff and Parent Guidelines are subject to change due to state and federal policies/mandates. Written notification of changes will be provided to parents and will supersede this handbook.**

Employee Signature

Date