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Dear Families,

There is no underestimating a child’s first experience at school, and Chicago Public Schools’ (CPS) Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE) is proud to offer high-quality preschool programs that introduce students to the joy of learning while striving to meet their unique educational needs.

Our district’s tuition-based preschool program offers small classes, experienced educators, and a curriculum that strikes a balance between academics and imaginative play. Our teachers provide individualized instruction to help children develop early competencies in literacy and math while allowing them to explore their creativity and build their social and emotional skills.

This handbook provides you with information and resources to guide you through the tuition-based preschool enrollment process and assist in supporting your child throughout the program. We commit to providing you with regular updates of your child’s progress, gather your feedback on how we can better support our students, and provide you with the tools you need to be active partners in your child’s education.

At CPS, our families are our most valuable partners in educating Chicago’s future generations. I thank you for entrusting CPS with the education of your child and urge you to reach out to the Office of Early Childhood Education with any questions or concerns at (773) 553-2010 or at OECE@cps.edu.

Sincerely,

LaTanya D. McDade
Chief Education Officer
Chicago Public Schools
Mission
The Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE) is committed to engaging students in high-quality experiences that support and respect the unique potential of each individual through best professional practices and meaningful family and community engagement.

Tuition-based Preschool Program
The Chicago Public Schools Tuition-based Preschool Program currently offers a full-day, school-based educational and child care program for 3- and 4-year-old children that aligns to the CPS calendar. This initiative promotes Mayor Lightfoot’s plan to make preschool services available to all Chicago children and their families. The program, however, is subject to change at the discretion of the Chicago Board of Education.
Special Features of the TBP Program

- Small class size
- Focus on social and emotional development
- Integrated, thematic curriculum organized on a continuum of how young children learn and grow, emphasizing early literacy and early mathematics skills
- Research-based literacy program
- Developmentally appropriate practice that takes into account both age and individual appropriateness, and incorporates all learning domains and styles
- Developmentally appropriate assessment that utilizes ongoing observation and systematic recording of children’s behavior to improve and individualize instruction and to communicate to parents children’s growth and development

School-based Policies/Application Process
Some of the policies of the Tuition-based Preschool Program, such as tuition rate are set centrally. Other policies, such as field trips and recess, are set at the school level and are dependent upon public health guidance. Parents are encouraged to contact schools for questions about individual programs.

Applications can be submitted at any time during the school year to the desired school or schools for which a family wants their child to be considered (applications may be submitted to multiple schools). A child can be offered multiple seats in the TBP, but families can only accept one offer. Parents will be notified of an offer via email or phone call. Notification is based on each school’s individual timeline. Once a placement at a site is offered, a non-refundable deposit of $700 must be submitted via the CPS TBP Program Illinois ePay page. Deposits are refunded if there is no space, or the room or school closes. In the event of early withdrawal, parents are only responsible for paying for days the child was enrolled.

Tuition Information
Tuition for the 2021-2022 school year is $10,692.50 for Oscar Mayer’s seven-hour program and $15,275 for South Loop's ten-hour program. There will not be a remote learning TBP option for the 2021-2022 school year. Tuition will only be discounted for periods of CPS-directed at-home learning.

Tuition is collected using Blackbaud Smart Tuition. Once accepted into the TBP program, parents are provided guidance on how to set up a Smart Tuition account. Instructions can also be found on the CPS OECE TBP Program Site. Deposit and tuition must be paid as scheduled. Children will be removed from the program if tuition is not current.
Parents choose the payment option that best meets their needs:

- Automatic deductions from a bank account
- Credit/debit card payments
- Mail-in Payments

There is a 5% discount for having siblings in the program, and a 5% discount for payment in full. If a family has a sibling in the program and pays in full, both discounts are applied. Tuition is due on the 20th for the upcoming month. On the 25th of that month, a $40 late fee is added. If the month is still unpaid by the 15th, the child will be removed from the program. No credit/refund will be owed if the school or room must close for short term emergencies, inclement weather, etc. Credits or refunds will be issued for periods of CPS-directed at-home learning.

**Registration**
The following items are required at the time of registration:

- A copy of a valid state ID or driver’s license
- Proof of residency (e.g., utility bill, apartment lease, or deed to real estate)
- Birth certificate—(A child must be three or four years old on or before September 1st of the school year for which parents are applying. If a child will be five years old on or before September 1st, he or she is not eligible for preschool and must enroll in kindergarten.)
- Current [health and immunization records](#) (dated within one year of the registration date)

**OECE Toileting Guidelines**
It is recommended, but not required, that children be toilet trained prior to the start of the school year. Preschool staff cannot assist with toileting if there is an accident. School staff will contact parents or emergency contacts if there is a toileting accident. Children should be supported in efforts to become independent in toileting.

**Selection Criteria**
Children will be selected according to each school’s selection criteria. Selection criteria can be found on each school’s website as well as the [CPS OECE TBP Program Site](#).

- Three-year-old children enrolled in the TBP Program will automatically be provided a seat the following school year, provided the program is still being offered by CPS and there is no unpaid tuition.

Participation in the TBP program does not guarantee your child’s acceptance into the school’s kindergarten program.
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Calendar
The TBP Program follows the CPS calendar. A calendar, including dates classes will be closed, will be provided by the school. School holidays are listed below:

- Labor Day: Monday, September 6, 2021
- Indigenous People's Day: Monday, October 11, 2021
- Veteran's Day: Thursday, November 11, 2021
- Thanksgiving Holiday: November 25-26, 2021
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Monday, January 17, 2022
- Presidents' Day: Monday, February 21, 2022
- Memorial Day: Monday, May 30, 2022

Full-day/Full School Year Program
Classroom schedules may differ; however, all schedules provide for the needs of the children:
- A balance between active and quiet activities
- Individual, small, and large group activities
- Outdoor play
- A balance between child-initiated and teacher-directed activities
- Children being read to in small and large groups
- Meals
- Naptime/quiet time after lunch

Staff Qualifications
Classrooms are staffed with early childhood certified teachers and teacher assistants with at least 60 hours of college credit. All teachers and teacher assistants have cleared the State of Illinois background check.

Curriculum
Each school uses the Creative Curriculum which is aligned to the Teaching Strategies GOLD™ assessment system.
Avenues for Learning
In addition to the reading readiness and math activities that take place in the classroom, the importance of children’s freedom to select learning centers is recognized and incorporated into daily activities. The role of the teacher and classroom staff is to facilitate learning by organizing the classroom environment and providing concrete learning experiences. The classroom staff promote cognitive development with guided questions and critical thinking. Staff provide the language and vocabulary or ask critical questions that are necessary to help children understand their actions or activities. For example, they help develop children’s thoughts, concepts, and knowledge by asking questions such as, “What happens if you add water to sand? What objects do you think will float; which will sink?” Classroom staff treat children with the dignity and respect that is necessary for them to learn.

Learning Centers
The early childhood classroom is divided into learning centers created to help children grow in all areas of their development. Children cultivate new skills and strengthen existing ones as they participate in the various interest centers. The following is a brief sample description of learning centers that may be found in classrooms.

- **Art Center:** A variety of materials and media are available for the children to explore, create, and experiment with. The focus is on the “process” of creating.

- **Block Center:** Blocks of various sizes, shapes, and materials are available. Blocks help children develop spatial-relation skills, introduce geometric shapes, and encourage critical thinking, imaginative play, problem solving, math concepts, and social skills.

- **Dramatic Center:** By dressing up and pretending to be different people (Mom, Dad, nurse, firefighter), children use their imagination and social skills and begin to understand the world around them.

- **Manipulative Center:** Children develop their fine motor and cognitive skills through puzzles, pegs, pegboards, connecting links, etc. Social skills, following directions, and taking turns are fostered through the use of board games.

- **Reading/Listening Center:** Children always have the opportunity to look at and read books. Stories are also available electronically/digitally so they may listen to stories and follow along in their books.

- **Writing Center:** The writing center is made up of writing materials and instruments such as markers, pencils, crayons, pens, stencils, stamps, envelopes, notepads, and different types of paper, etc. The center allows children to experiment with the writing process and move at their own pace through the various stages of writing.

- **Computer Station:** Children have the opportunity to become familiar with using a mouse, keyboard, computer, and developmentally appropriate software.

- **Music Center:** Students experience using different instruments and exploring sounds, as well as
experimenting with beat, tempo, and rhythm.

- **Science/Discovery**: Children create simple hypotheses and then test them by participating in experiments that might involve water, plants, seeds, their senses, etc.

- **Water Table**: Hands-on experiences help children understand the concept of water and experiment with volume, measurement, etc. Through practice, children discover how and what happens when water moves and takes on the shape of its container.

- **Sand Table**: Children have the opportunity to explore concepts such as mass, density, and weight and experiment with buckets, funnels, balances, shovels, etc.

**Assessment**

Children's learning is assessed using the Early Screening Inventory Revised (ESI-R) and monitored using the Teaching Strategies Gold™ assessment. Their mastery of the developmental milestones and skills are observed and recorded by the teacher and the teacher assistant. Skills mastered in preschool are aligned with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDs). This assessment provides the basis for determining children’s academic growth and development.

**Outdoor Activities**

The daily schedule includes going outdoors for large motor activities except during inclement weather. Children should come to school properly dressed to participate in outdoor activities.

**Field Trips**

Field trips are part of the educational program and support the particular themes that children are learning in the classroom. Parents are encouraged to chaperone and accompany children on field trips. There may be an additional charge to cover transportation and admission costs. Please note: for the 2021-2022 school year, the scheduling of field trips is dependent upon public health guidance.

**Naptime/Quiet Time**

A nap time of approximately one hour is provided each day. Your child may bring a pillow and/or bed linens, as well as a favorite doll or stuffed animal that will help them to rest or take a nap. Parents are required to take their child’s bed linens home every Friday for laundering and return them on Monday. Children who do not nap will engage in quiet activities.

**Change of Clothing**

An extra set of clean clothes must be kept at school for each child in case of toileting accidents.

**Absences**

If your child will be absent, please call to inform the classroom teacher or staff.

**Late Pickup**

Children must be picked up no later than the last pickup time designated by each school, or the individual school’s late policy will be followed. For program start and end times, click [here](#).
Parent Conferences and Progress Reports
Parent conferences are scheduled at least twice during the school year. Recommended months for conferences are November and April in conjunction with school report card pick-up days. Appointments should be made with the teacher to discuss your child’s progress. Progress reports are also distributed and available for pick up in February and June.

Dismissal from the Program
A child may be dismissed from the program for the following reasons:

- Tuition is not current
- Failure to pay late fees

Cancellation of the program: The Chicago Board of Education has the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel the program at the end of any semester of any school year.
Guidelines for Placement of Student with Disabilities in Tuition-Based Preschool Programs

I. Enrollment of Preschool Students with Individualized Education Program (IEPs) in Tuition-based programs:
Age-cycle 3 and 4 year-old students with disabilities can attend a Tuition-based Preschool Program if pursuant to the IEP, the least restrictive environment requires all early childhood special education teacher instructional minutes be provided in a general education preschool program. IEP services are provided at no cost to the parent; however, the parent is required to pay the tuition for their child to attend the program. If a student’s IEP requires a more restrictive environment, the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services will identify a school assignment in another preschool program in which the student’s IEP can be implemented. If a parent rejects this school assignment, it will be considered a rejection of the Chicago Public Schools’ offer of a free appropriate public education.

II. Miscellaneous Provisions
The Chicago Public Schools is not responsible for providing special education and related services beyond those required by the IEP for any student with disabilities attending a Tuition-based Preschool program. If a student with disabilities requires a reasonable accommodation to access the before or after school components of the Tuition-based Preschool program, the District will work with the parent to determine what is a reasonable accommodation. The Chicago Public Schools will ensure that school staff and parents of students with disabilities enrolled in the Tuition-based Preschool program are informed that there is no special education or related services during the child care hours (prior to 8:30 a.m. and after 3:00 p.m.), during vacations, e.g., winter and spring breaks, and that the program does not operate during the summer session. Students with disabilities can only be enrolled in a Tuition-based Preschool program if the child’s IEP can be implemented in such a setting.