

Parent Handbook

By: Grass Roots Education

Section 1: Daily Standards

1.0: Summary

Our goal is to provide a nurturing environment that supports our hands-on, individually tailored curriculum. The curriculum is self-directed, allowing students to fully utilize their remarkable capacity to imagine and explore. This begins with excellence in the fundamentals of education, including; optimal student-to-teacher ratios, meal preparation, safety protocols, and more. During these critical developmental years we nurture each student's imagination while building a strong foundation.

1.1: Safety

Safety is our highest priority. We implement multiple measures to protect every student, staff member, and family. All staff undergo thorough background checks. Every entrance remains locked at all times; the only way to enter is through approval by a dedicated staff member. This ensures no unobserved individual can access the premises.

We take child safety and wellbeing very seriously and monitor for any consistently concerning behaviors from students or adults. We exceed all state and governing-body requirements for health and safety. Every staff member is CPR certified, trained in developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), food safety, and AED use. We maintain an AED device (with a pediatric-specific setting) on site at all times, with regular servicing.

1.2: Meal Preparation

We are mindful of what our students consume. As the common mantra goes: "We are what we eat." We prepare fresh food daily with an emphasis on organic ingredients. All of our meals meet or exceed the Missouri Department of Education nutrition standards. The meal plan is published four weeks in advance. Students are welcome to bring their own lunch (cold). There are no reheating options for students who bring their own lunch.

1.3: Curriculum

Our curriculum is designed to spark and sustain curiosity. Core subjects evaluated individually include reading, writing, history, math, and science. Weekly enrichment subjects (without individual grading) include geography, Spanish, social studies, culture, art, and music.

Students can vary widely in interests and abilities. Therefore, we focus on personalizing learning while maintaining core subject standards. Group activities are focused on being inclusive for all ability levels. At the start of each semester, we begin with assessing students in every core subject. This allows us to cater each student's journey around their individual ability. The goal is to keep lessons engaging and relevant to the students' personal level within each core subject.

1.4: Physical Activity

Adequate physical activity is essential for a healthy learning environment. Our goal is to have at least two outside sessions each day, weather permitting, for thirty minutes. We also take frequent movement breaks to allow the students to have freedom of movement which improves focused learning time.

Section 2: Care and Discipline

2.0: Summary of Care Practices

We create a welcoming environment that fosters independence, self-expression, and responsibility through exploration, life skills, and freedom of choice. We speak with students as respected individuals, not as subordinates. Daily interactions include thought-provoking questions, time for self-resolution of conflicts, and multiple resolution options.

Every behavior (positive or challenging) is addressed through self-discovery. Teachers act first as guides and mentors, asking questions to understand each child's unique perspective rather than assuming. This approach helps students feel truly seen and heard while interacting with their teacher. We believe this is essential to a successful learning environment.

In summary, we: empower children to express themselves, take ownership of their growth, and learn through meaningful conversation and understanding. Each student's individuality becomes a powerful tool for joyful, curiosity-driven education.

2.1: Discipline Policy

Our approach is progressive and focused on helping students develop self-reflection and emotional understanding. Instead of asking "how can I stop this behavior", our teacher will ask "what skill does this child need to learn?". The teacher will guide the child on better choices that can be made rather than shaming them in front of their peers. If a child is exhibiting excessively bad behavior, they will be guided to our "calming corner" to reflect and will be able to join the rest of the class whenever they decide they are ready to make better choices. This "calming corner" is a place where over-stimulated children may go to calm down and reflect on their emotions/behavior in a way that does not feel shameful. It is the same space used for quiet activities so it is familiar to students and not a place of punishment.

We distinguish between non-physical and physical behaviors and respond accordingly.

2.1.1: Non-Physical Behavior Resolution

Common challenges for students include: verbal disagreements, strong language, or disruptive volume. These behaviors often stem from an emotion the child is still learning to manage. We begin with a conversation to identify the feeling and its cause, then offer healthy alternatives (quiet time, asking for help, etc).

If the behavior continues despite repeated positive guidance and parent communication, we may use the comfy corner after multiple attempts at redirection. The comfy corner is a peaceful area in the classroom (used voluntarily by students throughout the day) designed for calm

reflection—not punishment. All actions taken are discussed with the parent or guardian, and we welcome your ideas for supporting your child.

In the rare case that a student’s behavior consistently disrupts others’ ability to learn peacefully after every avenue has been explored and exhausted, we may need to discontinue enrollment. We will always work collaboratively with families first to prevent this outcome as it is never something that we want to enact.

2.1.2: Physical Behavior

Our primary responsibility is keeping every student safe. If a child’s actions create an unsafe situation we will first use verbal guidance and redirection. If necessary, we may gently intervene physically (after clear warnings) to stop immediate harm. We always prioritize emotional understanding and self-calming strategies over physical intervention, however, if the situation warrants immediate action to prevent the harm of another student we will act accordingly.

In extremely rare cases of persistent violence or self-harm that cannot be resolved through communication and guidance with the parents / guardians, we may need to discontinue enrollment to protect the other students. Every possible step is taken to support the child and family before reaching this point.

2.2: Sick Policy

If a student has a fever, cold, flu, or any contagious illness, they must remain home until symptom-free for 24 hours. We document all illness symptoms. Any student showing signs of illness—including high temperature, excessive sweating, sores, repeated sneezing/coughing, runny nose, or rash—may be asked to be picked up by a parent, guardian, or authorized adult.

A doctor’s note must be provided for any symptoms, including but not limited to: runny nose, cough, rash, or other symptoms that could be attributed to illness.

Allergens and Menu Transparency

To support families with food sensitivities, our weekly menu will include full ingredient lists at least three weeks in advance. This gives families ample time to review meals, identify concerns, and notify us so we can accommodate individual needs.

Section 3: Admissions and Discharge

3.0: Admissions

All admissions begin during open enrollment via outreach email, phone, or web form. After the form is complete, we schedule an admission interview. This process is separate from general inquiries or tours.

Following the interview, we will send an email within three business days to confirm or deny admission. While we aim to welcome every family, we must maintain standards that support our curriculum and community environment. If accepted, the email will include all required documents. These documents must be completed and returned within five business days to finalize enrollment.

3.1: Discharge

Either the provider or the parent/guardian may initiate discharge. The contract requires four weeks notice (via email or phone). We are happy to coordinate with the new school to ensure everyone has all necessary information.

All belongings must be collected within 5 business days of the final attendance day. Items left beyond this period will be mailed to the address on file, with an invoice for mailing costs.

3.1.1: Discharge – Payments

When sufficient notice is provided by either party, regular payments continue through the final day, and the deposit is refunded within one business day of the student's last day.

If a family ends enrollment without the required 10 business days' notice, the deposit will be retained to offset capacity impacts.

We reserve the right to end enrollment immediately in situations such as: behavior, safety concerns, non-payment, or other issues without refund of deposit.

Section 4: Child Abuse Prevention & Child Safety Policy

4.0: Purpose

Grass Roots Education is fully committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and secure environment for every child in our care. We maintain a zero-tolerance policy for any form of child abuse, neglect, or misconduct. This policy protects children from harm, supports our staff in maintaining appropriate boundaries, and helps build trust with families. We adhere to Missouri state laws and best practices to ensure every child's wellbeing.

4.1: Definition of Abuse

Child abuse includes any action (or failure to act) that harms or endangers a child's physical, emotional, or psychological wellbeing. This includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation, or exposure to inappropriate behavior or materials.

4.2: Screening & Selection of Staff

All staff undergo comprehensive screening before working with children, including:

- Criminal background checks (state and federal levels)
- Child abuse and neglect registry checks
- Reference verification
- Detailed application, interview, and policy review with signed acknowledgment

These measures exceed Missouri licensing standards to ensure only qualified, trustworthy individuals are entrusted with children's care.

4.3: Training Requirements

All staff receive initial and annual training on:

- Recognizing signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect
- Preventing abuse (including boundaries, appropriate interactions, and awareness of grooming behaviors)
- Mandatory reporting obligations under Missouri law
- Developmentally appropriate practices and safe child interactions

4.4: Reporting Suspected Abuse

Under Missouri law (RSMo 210.115), all staff are mandated reporters. If there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect (or if a child is observed in conditions that could reasonably result in harm):

- The staff member must immediately report to the Missouri Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 1-800-392-3738 (or online in non-emergency cases at the Children's Division portal). No internal approval or delay is permitted.
- We fully cooperate with any investigation by authorities.
- Good-faith reports are protected by law; there is no retaliation against reporters.

4.5: Response to Allegations

If an allegation of abuse or misconduct arises involving our program:

1. Child safety is prioritized immediately.
2. A report is made to the Hotline as required by law.
3. Parents/guardians are notified promptly (unless authorities advise otherwise).

4. We cooperate fully with investigations and authorities.
5. Any involved staff member is placed on administrative leave pending review.

We review incidents and update practices as needed to strengthen safety.

4.6: Ongoing Commitment

This policy is reviewed annually. Parents are encouraged to raise any concerns openly—we value transparent communication. By enrolling, families acknowledge this policy as part of our shared dedication to child safety and wellbeing.