

Independence Academy
Charter School

Pre-Kindergarten
Handbook
(2017 – 2018)



675 29 Road
Grand Junction, CO 81504
(970) 254-6850

Thank you for choosing Independence Academy's Pre-K program to support your amazing child in learning, growing and play! We look forward to getting to know your family.

Our Mission & Beliefs

Independence Academy's Pre-K program strives to create an exciting and engaging environment that is developmentally appropriate for beginning students. We embrace students of all learning styles and ability levels and believe in providing experiences that enrich each child's cognitive, social, emotional, physical and creative development.

We believe that:

- The Child's first teacher is his/her family. Thus, a partnership between students, educators and families is critical to the success of young students.
- *PLAY* is important! Through play, children are able to build upon their natural curiosity to explore their environment, be creative, test ideas, and develop emotionally, socially, cognitively and physically.
- Young children need to feel safe, comfortable and accepted in order to be ready to learn.
- Students need consistent, meaningful opportunities to explore and interact with other students, adults and the environment.
- It is important for students, staff and families to have a *growth mindset*. This means that all students can become thinkers, learners and problem solvers when given the opportunity and encouraged to do so. We are all capable of accomplishing great things.
- Interactions and relationships with adults should be as consistent as possible. They should promote positive self-esteem and caring behavior.
- Young children need to be active. This includes exploration of their environments, using hands-on materials and engaging in a variety of activities.

What to Expect from IAPK Program

- Each child will be celebrated as an individual and will be given the opportunity to develop positive self-esteem, while valuing themselves and others.
- Children should be eager to come to school because of our welcoming, positive and fun environment.
- Children will be supported to learn at their own pace and will be challenged at age and ability appropriate levels.
- Children will be engaged in explorations and hands-on manipulation of multiple tools and materials.
- Children will have Physical Education classes, dance, song and outdoor play to support active learning.
- Staff will consistently reinforce positive, self-generated conflict resolution, which encourages kindness and empathy.
- All children will participate in large group, small group and individual activities. Occasionally, they will participate in activities with older students at Independence Academy. Parents will be notified ahead of time.
- Pre-K is an important time to prepare young children for elementary school. They will learn basic skills such as: lining up, raising their hand, taking turns, holding a pencil, cutting, name recognition, letter and number recognition and much more. They will be informally assessed throughout the year.

- Children will be prepared academically for Kindergarten, so they will feel comfortable and confident when making the transition.
- Learning that is intriguing and relevant to the child.
- Learning that involves lots of fun, smiles and laughter.

Classroom Environment

Your child's classroom environment is thoughtfully designed to interest students and encourage them to explore and learn. Age-appropriate materials and relevant, fun learning opportunities will be available daily to stimulate curiosity and promote your child's growth.

Our Pre-Kindergarten program is comprised of students who are 4-years-old by July 15th. The Colorado Academic Standards are used to guide lesson plans for unique and FUN learning opportunities.

Our classroom will consist of engaging learning centers for children to explore. The materials in each center will be carefully chosen to foster creativity, encourage play, and support many of the unique interests of the children. The following classroom centers may be included in the classroom:

Imagination Station	Music Makers	Art Center
Quiet Reading Corner	Math Center	Science Center
Engineering Center	Technology Center	

Sign in & Out Procedure

Children must be signed in upon arrival and signed out when departing every day by a legal guardian or other designated adult that is listed on that child's emergency contact and pick up list. IAPK will have it's own sign in/out sytem in the classroom for you to easily sign your child in/out daily. Children under the age of 18 may not pick up your child. People picking up for the first time must have a picture ID with them and will be cross-referenced to make sure they are on the pick up list. Children will only be released to adults listed on the program registration form. If written permission is given by the parent or guardian, children may be released to another adult. In this instance, the teacher may ask for identification such as a driver's license.

Drop off & Pick up Procedure

Transportation of a child to and from school must be provided by parents. Family may park in any of the three main parking lots to drop off and pick up Pre-K students. Students must be walked to and from the Pre-K classroom door. To prevent unnecessary accidents, parents are asked to take their child(ren) directly to their class upon entering the building. Students leaving the building must be accompanied by parent/guardian from the classroom to the vehicle. Please do not allow your child to roam the building, classrooms, hallway or grounds. The school will not be held liable for accidents, incidents or injuries that may occur to children who are not under the immediate care of the Pre-K (or designated school) staff. When children are released from the Pre-K classroom to their parent/ guardian, they are no longer under the care of the Pre-K or other school staff.

Daily Schedule (Monday – Thursday 8:15 – 3:30)

Our classroom will have 1-2 qualified teachers and one Director verifying attendance on a half-hour basis, to identify where children are at all times. Teachers will conduct a name-to-face headcount after each transition. The teachers will assure that guardians signs their student in, upon arrival and out for departure, daily. The director (and other staff) will also take periodic headcounts throughout the day.

Arrival and Early Bird Activities 8:00-8:15

Circle 8:15-8:45

Table Time 8:45-9:15

Exploration 9:15-9:45

Small Group 9:45-10:15

Snack & Fresh Air 10:15-11:00

Music, Art, Library or PE 11:00-11:20

AM Student Departure 11:00

Lunch/quiet time 11:30 -12:30

Exploration 12:30-1:00

Circle 1:00-1:30

Table time 1:30-2:00

Snack & Fresh Air 2:00-2:45

Small Group 2:45-3:00

Music, Art, Library or PE 3:00-3:20

Clean up / Departure 3:20-3:30

Adult supervision will not be available in the classroom until 8:00, which is 15 minutes prior to the actual start of the school day. If you and your child arrive early, feel free to play on the school playground until 8:00. Please be aware that you must supervise your child until 8:00. At 8:00, you may enter the pre-K classroom and participate in the Early Bird Reading Program with your student until class begins at 8:15.

Pre-K student A.M. half days end at 11:00.

Please make every effort to pick your child up on time. If your child is not picked up within ten minutes of dismissal time, your child will be sent to the office (AM only) or signed into the "After School Program" (PM or Full day students). You will be charged accordingly for those services.

If we cannot contact anyone on the list to pick your student up, we are required by state mandate to contact Social Services after thirty minutes to report abandonment.

Supplies

Parents may contribute supplies if they wish, however it is not required. Please remind your child that items brought to school are for the entire class to share. Some household items that we can always use in our classroom are...

Dry pasta	sponges	flour
Material scraps	salt	cotton balls
Magazines	catalogs	boxes of jello
Buttons	cookie cutters	paper plates

Boxes of instant pudding

Snacks / Lunch

Due to allergies and unique nutritional needs of many children, we ask that you please provide your child with nutritious snacks daily. Fresh water will be available all day and milk is available to purchase for \$.50 daily. Half-day students will need one snack, while full-day students will need two snacks and a healthy lunch daily. Please make sure that the teacher is aware of any food allergies that your child may have.

Admission and Registration

The Pre-K program is funded and licensed through Independence Academy Charter School. We operate on a lottery system. Siblings of existing students and staff member's children will receive preference. To fill out an application, please contact the main office at Independence Academy Charter School.

Tuition

- Four ½ day sessions per week - \$265 per month.
- Four full days per week - \$500 per month.

Tuition is due by the first of the month. Please make payments in the main office or on our website, through our paypal account.

Communication must be made within one week of a missed payment. If your student's account is not kept up to date, and no communication has been made regarding extenuating circumstances, our program reserves the right to suspend services. If, at any point, fees are more than 15 days overdue your child's slot will be at risk of termination. We will hold a waiting list at all times. Return checks will have a \$22.00 charge added to your account.

If you need to withdraw a child from our Pre-K program, please give us 30 days written notice, so that we will be able to fill your child's slot.

Personal Belongings / Clothing

Please do not allow your child to bring toys, money, or other items from home that could be lost or broken. All bags, coats and additional clothing or items need to have child's complete name written in them.

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothing, which they can manage themselves as much as possible. Daily outdoor activities are a part of our program. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather and that all clothing is labeled with your child's full name. We require one complete set of extra clothing to be left at the school for emergency situations. We recommend that you place a shirt, pants, underwear and socks in a gallon-sized ziplock bag labeled with your child's name. This can be left in their cubby for the school year.

Naptime

Full-day students are given an opportunity to nap or rest after lunch. We try to make nap time calm, comfortable and relaxing. Sleeping mats will be provided which are bleached daily. Parents will need to provide a crib sheet and blanket weekly. These linens need to be taken home on Thursdays, washed and returned on Mondays.

Birthdays

Your child's birthday is a special day. You are welcome to bring treats in to share with your child's class. Please check with your teacher in advance when you plan to bring treats and she/he will let you know how many children for which to plan for. Store bought treats are preferred.

Parent/ Staff Communicaiton

Communication between teachers, administration and parents is essential. Please keep us updated on student information and changes that may affect your child. Please Notify the School @ 254-6850 if :

- Your child will be absent
- Any changes in address or phone number
- Any changes in authorized persons picking up your child
- Or if there are any significant changes at home.

Parent or guardians are welcome to contact the staff, or visit the classroom at any time. Please remember to sign in at the main office, as well as the classroom sign-in sheet. We will send monthly newsletters via email and will post important information on our *Parent Information Board*, directly outside of the Pre-K room. Parent/Teacher conferences will be held twice a year for all pre-kindergarteners.

If a parent or guardian has a concern or complaint we strongly encourage them to communicate with the Pre-K Teacher or Director first. If the concern is not resolved, the Principal or Director of Independence Academy, should be contacted. Should the concern persist, the Division of Early Care and Learning can be reached at the following:

Division of Early Care and Learning
Colorado Department of Human Services
1575 Sherman Street
Denver CO 80203

Phone: (303) 866-5958

Classroom Volunteers

We welcome and invite all of our parents to become classroom volunteers. We have many opportunities for parents to become involved, including out-of-the classroom activities for working parents. Please remember that as a volunteer you become a working part of the teaching team in your child's classroom and you will also be touching the lives of many other children.

Discipline

Our goal is to guide your child in the development of appropriate behavior. Children will be encouraged to solve their own problems through teacher and puppet modeling. Natural and logical consequence will be used, encouraging children to be responsible for their own behavior. Other times, the teacher may redirect the child towards a more acceptable activity or give the child choices that are more appropriate.

Child Abuse Reporting

Federal law mandates that suspected child abuse or neglect be reported to the Department of Social Services. For reporting suspected cases of child abuse please call (970) 242-1211.

Sunscreen policy

We will provide NO-AD Skin Care sunscreen 50 SPF for your children to self-apply daily in the classroom before going outside. If you would prefer a different brand, please bring your own bottle in, labeled with your child's name. We will keep it in the room for them. You will be required to sign a separate permission form for us to be able to apply sunscreen to your child.

Illness

For the health and well-being of children and staff, please do not send your child to school if they appear ill. The following is a list of some reasons to keep your child home:

- Temperature over 100 degrees. Students must be at home for at least 24 hours or one full day AFTER a fever is gone (without the use of fever reducing medicine), before they may return to school.
- Excessive green or yellow mucus (especially new discharge or sneezing)
- Persistent cough or difficulty breathing
- Red, inflamed, itchy or swollen eye(s) (especially if they have white or yellow discharge or continue to water).
- Red and inflamed throat
- Skin Irritation or rash – if you know that a rash is harmless, please bring a note from your health care provider.
- Nausea/Vomiting or Diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Head Lice 24 hours after treatment

Medical Procedures

IACS cannot care for sick children except for brief periods when the child becomes ill at school. The director will contact the parents, through the main office, if a child arrives at school displaying or develops any of the above symptoms. We will need to excuse him/her from the class in order to protect the other children. Parents will be required to pick the child up as soon as possible. The child will be cared for in the main school office until parents arrive. Children must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducers before returning to school. Children must also be vomit and diarrhea free for 24 hours before returning to school.

If a child has a contagious condition he/she must be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school. The Director/Principal has the right to request a doctor's note clearing a child to return to school if there is question about the child's condition.

We are unable to accept children who have a communicable disease (such as measles, mumps, chickenpox ect.) or obvious acute illness. Therefore, please **Do Not** send your child to school if he/she has signs of possible contagious disease. They will be required to stay home until symptoms have subsided. A doctor's note may be required for them to return. If your child has a confirmed case of any communicable disease, please inform IAPK so that we may notify the other parents and report to MCHD Communicable Disease, as required.

If injury occurs during the day at IACS, parents will be contacted immediately to pick up their child. In the case a serious injury occurs or a medical problem arises (allergic reactions, asthma attacks, head injuries, possible broken bones, deep lacerations or wounds) the parent and local rescue squad will be contacted to assist. The children will be escorted to the hospital of choice as listed on your enrollment form. If the condition is not life threatening the Director may transport the child to the hospital or physician and the parents will be contacted immediately. All medical bills will be the responsibility of the parent. Tuition will stay the same and will not be adjusted for any missed days due to sickness or injury.

Immunizations

Each child is required to be up to date on their immunizations. Parents/guardians seeking non-medical (religious or personal belief) exemptions for perschool must submit non-medical exemption forms at each age when required vaccines are due. You can obtain exemption forms from the Director.

If you choose to not do immunizations and Do Not fill out an exemption form and do not let the school know, you could be excluded from the school's roster, until the proper paperwork is completed.

Please be aware that we accept non-immunized children here at IAPK. Teachers will keep a sign posted indicating some pre-K student may not have immunizations. In the case of an outbreak of a communicable disease, children who are not immunized or are not current on their immunizations will be excluded until the contagious time frame has past. This means that they may not attend school during the contagious window of time.

If your child is exposed to a communicable disease, such as chicken pox, measles, strep infection, or hepatitis, you must report this to your child's teacher immediately. All staff and parents will be notified if an exposure occurs.

Administering Medicines

If your child needs medicine during school hours you will be required to fill out a medical consent form. All medication must be prescribed by a doctor or person with authority (parent/legal guardian) including over the counter medication. The proper dose labeled on the box or consent form will be given to the child. The Director, who is Medication-certified, will be the only person administering the medication. All medication will be secured in a proper lock box out of the reach of children. Please make sure:

1. The medical consent form is signed and dated. This can be picked up in the school office.
2. All medicine must be in the original container and must not be expired. The child's name must be labeled clearly with doctor's name, and dosage must be clearly stated on prescribed medication.

3. For emergency medication such as asthma and epi-pens a one time permission form must be signed and is good for one school year. The permission slip will be kept in each child's individual file.
4. *Please note* you must fill out the proper consent forms and have them signed by a physician or your child will not be able to receive medication at school.

SAFETY

Field Trips / Walks

Field trips and nature walks will be taken periodically and are considered an important part of the educational program. All parents will be notified ahead of time about any of these outings, and will sign a permission form. The same responsible adult supervision will be provided on these outings as in the classroom. In case of an emergency, one staff member will always have a cell phone, and contact information for each child. We will ensure proper safety measures are taken and encourage parent volunteers for these outings. We ask that no toys or personal belongings be brought along - IACS is not responsible for any lost items.

On a trip, if a child happens to go missing, the employee responsible will place the remaining children under the care of another staff member. All able employees will actively search for missing student. At that point, the remaining students will be escorted to vehicle by staff member(s). If the missing child is not quickly located, emergency contact will be made through 911. Parents will also be contacted at this time.

Lost Child Policy

Employees who believe that a child is missing will immediately contact additional staff members as well as the Director and Principal. Search for the missing student will take immediate precedence. All inside and outside areas will be immediately searched. This includes cupboards, bathrooms, closets, sheds, etc. to assure that all locks and gates are secure. If the child cannot be quickly located, emergency contact will be made through 911.

Police Involvement and Following Procedures

As soon as police arrive, staff will coordinate to assist in the search. Other staff will assure that remaining children are kept safe and reassured. One staff member with details will stay with police to continue in search effort. Ongoing risk assessments will be carried out and an immediate review will take place following the incident.

Emergency Procedure / Evacuation of the Building

Fire Drills are held annually on a scheduled basis. Emergency exit information will be posted in the classroom. Students are expected to follow their teacher's instructions. Students are directed outside by the teacher, and will remain in specified areas until directed to return to the building.

Bomb Threats will be treated seriously. Staff will evacuate children, just as they would in a fire drill. The Principal or Director will assess the situations severity and determine whether a site evacuation is warranted. If necessary, the school will relocate to the off site evacuation location. The police and fire departments will be notified. Children will not be allowed to re-enter the building until it is considered safe.

Lockdown Drills are held on a bi-monthly basis. Students are to remain in their classroom and away from doors and windows until they are instructed to **shelter in place**. In a lockdown, all

doors are locked and no one is allowed to enter or leave the school. Furthermore, no communication outside of the school will be made during these brief periods of time.

Shelter in Place will occur when there is a threatening situation in our school's vicinity. It is a precautionary measure to keep everyone safe. Classes will continue as usual, but no one will be allowed in or out of the building during a Shelter in Place. All doors will be locked.

Tornadoes/Severe Winds - The Director has located the safest area in the building in the event of a tornado or severe winds. The children will be escorted to the safe area. Practice drills will be held twice a year.

Evacuation Procedure - The program staff leader will evacuate the pre-kindergarten site in the event of a disaster. The staff will take the sign-in sheets and emergency contacts with them. All bathrooms will be checked and all lights turned off. In case of an evacuation where we are unable to reoccupy the building, we will walk as a group to the nearest evacuation site to call emergency help and notify all parents of our location.

Natural Disaster - In case of a natural disaster we will follow the evacuation procedure and walk to the nearest safe site. Emergency contact will be made and parents will be notified of our location as soon as possible. If possible, all children's personal belongings will be brought with them. If it is not possible to remain at the school site we will leave a note on the front entrance as to where we have relocated the children.

Active Shooter Plan - In the event the school has an active shooter on the premises, all children will be escorted immediately by all able staff to the nearest, safest locked shelter (rooms, closets, bathrooms etc.). Children will be reassured by staff members and kept calm and quiet. If anyone is harmed, an able staff member will perform First Aid until the situation is taken over by police. The teachers and Director are certified in active shooter training at all times. Children will not be let out of their locked shelter until the police deem the area safe. The staff members will not open or unlock the doors under any circumstances. The Principal may unlock the doors when it is safe to do so. Police officers may unlock doors as well, after identify themselves and showing proper badges.

Reuniting Families after an Emergency or Disaster Plan - Once all children and staff are accounted for, parents/legal guardians will be contacted immediately by staff or local business phone(s). Parents/ families will be able to pick their children up from designated spots immediately, but may be asked to show identification. The Director will always carry a cell phone and emergency contact forms for each child.

Children with Disabilities and those with Access and functional needs - Children with physical or functional disabilities will be placed in a wagon and walked with the rest of the class as stated in the evacuation plan.

Emergency Closing - In case of emergencies such as severe weather, fire, power failures, or earthquakes that force closure, IACS will follow School District 51 policy in deciding to close.

Inclement and Excessively Hot Weather - The center's policy on inclement or excessively hot weather is to go inside and have all planned activities take place indoors. Severe temperature guidelines are as follows: Below 30 degrees or above 95 degrees. The final decision is at the discretion of the Director or Principal.

Expulsion and Child's Mental Health Policy

At IACS, we value each child's physical, social, emotional and mental health. We strive to nurture and mentor each child's development in all of these areas. If there is a situation where a child has a difficult time adjusting to our program, we will communicate openly with families and quickly begin working towards a solution where all team members are working on a plan to support that child. If however, a child might need additional care that we are not able to provide, our staff will work hand in hand with the child's family to help guide them to a program that might better suit their unique needs. The child's well being and development always comes first. Child Find, a local program, may be recommended to help identify the center in which the child would thrive.

If staff feel a child is not thriving in our program or may be causing a threat to the other children in our program, families may be asked to withdraw their child from our program. IAPK will give you 2 weeks to find alternative care. Please know that we will work closely as a team and provide extensive support before arriving at this step. Expulsion of any child will be the last possible option. In the case of expulsion, parents are required to conduct themselves in a polite, professional manner.

Acknowledgment and Understanding of Pre-Kindergarten Handbook

I _____ have read and understand the policies and procedures outlined in the Independence Academy Pre-Kindergarten Handbook. Our family agrees to abide by the guidelines as described in the handbook.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

