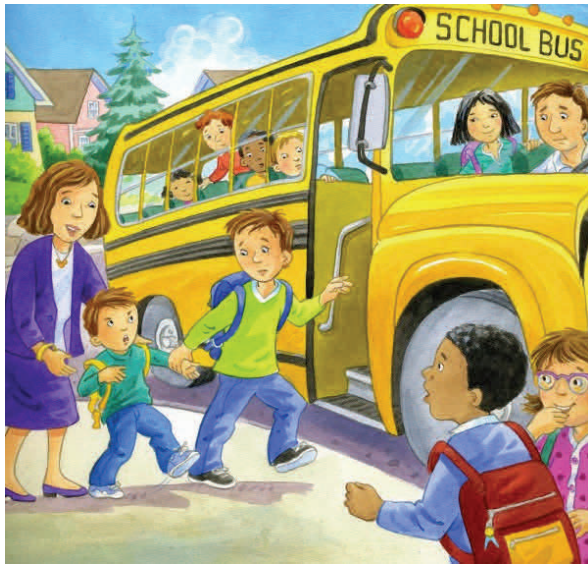


PARENTS' HANDBOOK FOR PRESCHOOL CENTERS IN BELIZE



Produced by
Early Childhood Education & Development Center
Ministry of Education
Revised 2006

DEAR PARENTS:

Thank you for choosing this preschool center for your child's early education. The Preschool Unit, with support from the preschool teachers countrywide worked very hard to develop this information handbook. We hope it assists you in experiencing a pleasant stay within our preschool community.

The Preschool Unit provides support to all preschools in Belize. Focus is place on teacher and parent education, supervision visits, resource development and management training. If we can be of help, please contact the Early Childhood Coordinator at the District Education Center, Santa Elena.

This is to ensure that you child receive a developmentally appropriate programme that will prepare our young children to succeed. We can be reached at telephone 804-2271.

PARENT ACTION COMMITTEE (PAC) / PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

The Unit recommends that each preschool have a PAC or PTA. This is a group of parents who assist and support the activities of the preschool center. These parents will work with the teachers to plan and conduct special events, such as fundraising activities, and field trips, which occur during the preschool year. The success of the PAC/PTA helps with the quality of education that a preschool center can provide

Those community based preschool centers who receive special assistance from the Ministry of Education are required by Education Rules 2000 to have a school committee that will assist the center in its operation. This committee is guided by Education Rules 2000.

Thank you for taking time to read our handbook. Now that you know what we are all about, we would like to sign the signature slip, which is your pledge to the preschool center.

TOYS

Preschools welcome any donations of appropriate toys for use in the centers. Teachers will check all donations to ensure that they are safe for the children. Toys that encourage aggressive violent play are not allowed in preschools, especially toy gun and knives.

SPECIAL EVENTS/FIELD TRIPS

Special events and field trips are important in the education and development of preschool children. Preschool centers welcome families to participate and support all events and trips that are planned throughout the year. The following are regular activities conducted by most preschools centers in Belize:

- National Days– September
- Harvest Time– October
- Cultural Days– as they occur
- Christmas– December/January
- Child Stimulation Month– March
- Easter– March/April
- Moving on Ceremony– June
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WELCOME

Welcome to our Preschool Community. Presently there are 39 Preschools in the Cayo District. Our Preschools receive support from the preschool unit, parents and their communities. This positive support enables us to provide quality services to Belizean families.

Preschool teachers are trained professionals, dedicated, hardworking, and patient who believe in the importance of Early Childhood, care and development.

Preschool Education

Preschool Education is the bridge between the home and primary school. The goal of preschool is for children to learn those readiness skills that are needed to succeed in formal education. Emphasis is placed on learning through play, which allows children to develop their pre math, pre reading, fine motor, gross motor and communication skills in a positive child centered environment.

SCHOOL YEAR

The preschool year follows School Calendar set out by the Ministry of Education. Always check with your preschool teachers about holidays and other closure days.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Most preschools are opened for only a morning session. Please check with your preschool to see if there is an afternoon session. Schools morning and afternoon sessions are as follows

- Morning session starts at 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and is for children four to five years of age.
- Afternoon sessions start at 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and is for children three to four years of age.

DAILY PROGRAM

A regular preschool session should include the following:

- Play Time
- Lesson Time
- Circle Time
- Snack Time
- Group Time
- Music and Movement time
- Outdoor Playtime

DISCIPLINE/BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

The following behavior is not acceptable in any preschool center:

- Biting
- Scratching
- Finger gesture
- Swearing
- Kicking
- pitching
- spitting
- fighting

Parents will be asked to come to the preschool center to work with the teacher and child to encourage positive appropriate behavior for their preschool child.

PARENT SUPPORT

Parents and teachers must work together to provide a positive learning environment for all children. The following are ways that parents can assist their child's preschool center:

- Cooperate and respect the rules of the center.
- Communicate and support all the teachers.
- Visit on a regular basis and make every effort to attend parent meetings.
- Volunteer when needed, especially for special events, such as repairs and cleaning, etc.
- Donate supplies, materials and your time whenever possible;
- Attend Parent Education Workshop when conducted.

FEES & PAYMENT

Tuition varies from Preschool to Preschool and is used to pay the teachers salaries, utility bills, and purchase the necessary material and cleaning supplies needed for successful operation. Fees should be paid at the beginning of each month to ensure that the preschool is able to continue with a quality programme. A late fee may be charged if fees are not being paid in a timely fashion, please check this at registration. Preschools may request extra money from parents to support special events during the school year (field trips, parties, moving on activities, etc.)

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Parents are responsible for the drop off the pick up of children at the designated arrival and departure times. Only persons listed by the parents with the preschool will be allowed to pick up children. No preschool child will be allowed to walk to and from the preschool center without a responsible guardian. Parents can be charged taxi fare if children are left at the preschool after hours. Please contact your child about this serious issue.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Each parent must provide another contact person and/or phone number at registration who can be contacted in an emergency situation. This person must be an adult who can take responsibility for the child in the parents' absence.

HEALTH ISSUES

All children must be immunized and healthy to attend preschool. The following is a list of illnesses which would hinder a child from attending preschool and require a doctor's note to re-attend:

- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- Head lice
- Tuberculosis (Tb)
- Measles, Chicken Pox & Mumps
- Serious Cold, Flu & whooping Cough

Parents will be called to remove their child during preschool hours if they are not well enough to participate in the daily programme.

FOOD

Preschool encourage nutritious eating at snack time and cultural foods are welcome. Preschool teachers are encouraged by the Unit to charge a small fee from snack, which would be provided by the center. Some of these food are:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Breads
- Real Milk & juice
- Cheese & crackers
- Tortillas
- Eggs
- Cereal

CLOTHING/SHOES/PERSONAL THINGS

Uniforms are encouraged at most preschools but are not a necessity. Children must come appropriately dressed in comfortable clothes and footwear suitable for indoor and outdoor play. Children should arrive at preschool clean and tidy in appearance.

Parents are discouraged from sending their child to school with any kind of jewelry. Teachers are not responsible for party clothes and jewelry during the preschool year.

REGISTRATION

Registration usually occurs during the month of May and June. Please check the preschool center in your community for late registration. Registration fee vary fro center to center.

Registration or birth Certificates and completed Immunization Cards are required for registration.

WITHDRAWAL

- A month's notice must be given to the preschools if you wish to transfer or withdraw your child. Any parent wishing to transfer or withdraw their child from the preschool must complete the necessary form. All fees must be paid before withdrawal or transfer is complete.