



**Pineywoods Academy Charter School  
Pre Kindergarten Program Guidelines  
2009-2010**

**Information on Pre Kindergarten Rules**

The prekindergarten program developed by Pineywoods Academy is based on the guidelines as set out by the Texas Education Agency. The Pineywoods Academy prekindergarten program shall be designed to develop skills necessary for success in the regular public school curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills.

The Pre-K program is designed to promote children’s knowledge and skills in all developmental areas—cognitive, social/emotional, physical, and aesthetic—and to establish a foundation for lifelong learning.

There are no Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for prekindergarten. However, in an effort to align the Pre-K program with the TEKS, Pre-K curriculum guidelines have been developed by the Texas Education Agency. These curriculum guidelines provide challenging but achievable skills and concepts that four year old children are to know and be able to do in each subject area delineated in the kindergarten TEKS. The guidelines are organized by academic content areas that support integration of curriculum and build connections between and among all disciplines.

**Learning Environment**

The PreK program has been designed to provide a learning environment that will:

- Include important educational objectives in the daily routine, to ensure the learning focus is relevant to the students, and to provide intentional instruction in a playful, joyful atmosphere;
- Teach responsibility for one’s own behavior;
- Encourage positive behaviors toward learning;
- Teach students to share and cooperate with others;
- Teach language / literacy skills and strategies, mathematical thinking about patterns and relationships, order and predictability, and logic and meaning;
- Promote health habits and routines;
- Encourage physical activities through the use of large and small muscles;
- Promote aesthetic expression and appreciation through art, music and dramatic play; and

- Teach the concepts and skills that will provide a strong foundation for academic success.

## **Curriculum Framework**

During the Pre-K years, children's experiences with communication and literacy begins to form the basis for their later school success. Given adequate opportunities to interact with responsive adults and peers in language and print-rich environments, young children develop vocabulary, extended language skills, and knowledge of the world around them. They develop listening comprehension and phonological awareness; understanding of the everyday functions of print; motivation to read; appreciation for literary forms; and print awareness and letter knowledge. They learn what books are and how to use them. Understanding the value of literacy as a means of communication, as well as coming to enjoy reading, is accomplishments typical of the future good reader. These language and literacy accomplishments are best achieved through activities that are integrated across different developmental areas: cognitive development, fine and gross motor development, and social and emotional development. It is important to consider native language, augmentative communication, and sensory impairments in accomplishing these guidelines.

Pre-K educators should provide opportunities to promote language and literacy learning in children who speak a language other than English. Pre-K students will attend Spanish classes. The Texas Pre Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines outline language and literacy accomplishments for four-year-old children in their native language. For students whose first language is other than English, the native language serves as the foundation for English language acquisition. Specific guidelines for the language and literacy development of children whose home language are not English in English-only settings are addressed in the guidelines.

### **Mathematics**

Mathematics learning builds on children's curiosity and enthusiasm, and challenges children to explore ideas about patterns and relationships, order and predictability, and logic and meaning. Consequently, quality instruction occurs in environments that are rich in language, encourage children's thinking, and nurture children's explorations and ideas. These ideas include the concepts of number pattern, measurement, shape, space, and classification.

### **Science**

Young children are natural scientists. They are eager to discover all they can about the world in which they live. In Pre-K children participate in simple investigations that help them begin to develop the skills of asking questions, gathering information, communicating findings, and making informed decisions.

Using their own senses and common tools, such as a hand lens, students make observations and collect information. Through these processes children learn about their world.

Children enter the classroom with many conceptions about the natural and constructed world—ideas that they have gained from prior experiences. Meaningful science learning experiences help children investigate those pre-existing ideas while building a foundation for additional knowledge. These meaningful experiences increase children's understanding of the natural world, living things, cycles, change, and patterns—concepts that organize the learning of science.

### **Social Studies**

Social studies concentrate on the nature of people and their world, the heritage of the past, and contemporary living and culture. The social studies are both integral to young children's lives and of great interest to them. Driven by a desire to know and achieve mastery over self and their environment, children are eager to gain understanding of the many aspects of their cultural and environmental world. Through social studies, children begin to develop the self-understanding that will serve as a foundation for learning about others and the world around them. Although all aspects of education have the goal of preparing children to become contributing members of society, social studies are particularly well suited to foster the skills and attitudes necessary for participation in a democracy. Skills such as problem solving, decision-making, and working independently and with others in a classroom prepare children to become fully-functioning citizens.

### **Fine Arts**

Young children express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings using a variety of symbols. Through their art, music, and dramatic play, children actively engage in representing what they know and how they think, using problem-solving strategies to express ideas in different forms. The fine arts enhance children's ability to interpret symbols and are associated with growth in all areas of development, including academic learning.

### **Health And Safety**

Young children learn health-promoting habits and routines in Pre-K. In these early years, they develop basic concepts, attitudes, and skills about nutrition, safety, hygiene, and physical activity that contribute to their well being. Children's experiences with their health and discovery and ways to improve it enhance their desire and ability to make wise decisions for healthy living in the future.

## **Personal and Social Development**

Pre-K children develop personal and social skills that enable them to function well within the social setting of the classroom. Children develop a sense of who they are and their capabilities, and establish positive relationships with others, which enables them to effectively participate in class and community and accomplish meaningful tasks.

## **Physical Development**

Movement is at the center of young children's lives. Pre-K children participate in experiences that foster fundamental motor and movement skills, such as walking and running, which are necessary for participation in games and sports throughout life. They begin to develop gross motor skills that involve throwing, catching, and kicking, and fine motor skills that involve greater precision and accuracy of movement.

## **Technology Applications**

Young children have much to gain from the use of technology. In Pre-K, they expand their ability to acquire information, solve problems, and communicate with others. Regular access and exposure to computers and related technology can enhance this learning. Children use engaging, age-appropriate, and challenging software, and technology to extend their knowledge and to enrich their learning of curriculum content and concepts. These technologies serve as important learning tools and are integrated throughout the instructional program,

Children learn the basic functions of the computer and related technologies. They develop techniques for handling and controlling various input devices, and become increasingly confident and independent users of age-appropriate software programs.

## **A Typical Day**

Your child must arrive at school no later than 8:00 a.m. each day. If your child will eat breakfast at school, please have them at school no later than 7:45 a.m. to ensure they will be in the classroom by 8:00.

At the beginning of class, your child joins with classmates to talk about the day. Students are engaged in writing, language and mathematics instruction. During center time, children choose from activities in the centers which include dramatic play, table toys, blocks, art, sensory table, library and computers. Learning is child-centered through play facilitated by the staff. Students will learn the importance of concluding activities, putting away materials and cooperating with others.

Children receive intentional instruction on targeted objectives in a small group setting. Students are taught language, literacy, and mathematic concepts and skills through a variety of instructional strategies. To ensure students are physically active, energetic outdoor play provides opportunities for children to develop large muscles, to engage in social interactions, and to experience nature. Children also learn self-management by following rules and safety guidelines.

Your child will experience music and physical activities in the classroom and during the outdoor learning time. Learning to follow rules and safety guidelines as well as building large motor skills will accompany the fun students enjoy. Reading is an extremely important for academic success Teachers read to children in both large and small groups. Reading enhances listening comprehension, stimulates thought-provoking questions and conversation, and develops concepts of print and vocabulary. Your child will be provided a daily rest time. Naptime will decrease throughout the year as children prepare for kindergarten

It is very important for students to remain at school until school dismisses at 2:50 p.m. When parents pick students up early, the child will miss valuable instruction and center time. This instruction will not be able to be made up. Pineywoods Academy has a well-defined dismissal procedure. You will receive details from your child's teacher regarding arrival and dismissal procedures. Your child's safety is our first priority, and we appreciate you following the procedures.

Your child must attend class regularly for optimum learning. Every child, once enrolled in public school, must adhere to the law established by the state legislature regarding school attendance. The same law governs preschool students as school-age students. All vacations and trips should be taken during school holidays or during the summer.

If it is necessary for your child to be absent, please call the school office that day to report the absence. Upon return to school, send a note stating why your child was absent.

### **Tardiness**

Teachers begin their school day promptly in order to maximize the instructional time. When your child arrives late, it requires one member of the teaching team to break away from the classroom instruction to assist him/her, which disrupts his/her learning and the learning of others.

## **HEALTH AND MEDICAL INFORMATION**

### **State and Local Food Regulations**

The Texas Department of Agriculture has issued regulations regarding what can be served during the school day to the students in public schools. For any type of party or food experience, the following foods are prohibited:

- Carbonated beverages (soda)
- Water Ices (Popsicle)
- Chewing gum
- Hard candy (e.g., lifesavers, lollipops, sour balls, mints, candy sticks, Starbursts, Jolly Ranchers, candy canes, communication hearts, Red Hots)
- Jellies such as gum drops or jelly beans
- Marshmallow candies
- Cotton candy

For any other party, such as holiday party, birthday snacks, or other approved parties, acceptable snack items include chocolate candy (e.g., M&Ms and Kisses), cakes (without nuts due to food allergies), cupcakes, cookies, graham crackers, mini bagels, animal crackers, pretzels, muffins, chips, and ice cream (without nuts). Popsicles made out of 100% fruit juice are also allowed. Drinks that are allowed include milk, water, and sparkling water and fruit juices. Sometimes children like to bring something to share with their friends, such as candy, for special treats. Please make your selection from the acceptable list. If you ever have a question, please check with your child's teacher.

### **Severe Illness and Hospitalization**

When a child is hospitalized or ill for an extended period of time, contact the teacher and the school nurse. Teachers enjoy close relationships with students, and they like to send get-well messages when children are in the hospital or ill for a lengthy time.

#### **Illness**

A child with any of the following conditions should not be in school:

- fever or vomiting within the past 24 hours
- diarrhea
- undiagnosed skin or eye irritation
- symptoms of any other illness or condition not diagnosed by a doctor
- Pineywoods Academy has a “no nit” policy in regards to lice.

## **Medication**

Medication must be kept in the office and shall be administered to a student in the school office under the following conditions:

- Only medication that cannot be scheduled for other than school hours may be given.
- All prescription medication must be in the original container and have a prescription label.
- Nonprescription medicine must be in the original container/bottle labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, and explicit instructions for giving.
- All medication must be brought to school by the parent/guardian and must be stored in the school office. Students are not allowed to keep medication anywhere in the classroom area.
- A written request on a Pineywoods Academy medication request form to administer the medication from the parent or guardian must accompany all medication.
- Any unused medication shall be destroyed two weeks after the dosage if not otherwise instructed by the parent. Medication will not be sent home with a student. It may be picked up by the parent at the school office.

## **Clothing**

Pre-K students will follow the dress code as set out in the Student/Parent Handbook. Please label all articles of clothing that your child brings to school. Numerous articles of clothing end up in the school's lost and found each year.

Because accidents and spill occur at times, each student will bring an extra set of clothing and shoes to school. The teacher will store these extra items in the classroom.

## **Backpack**

Your child needs to bring a school bag or backpack every day. Considerations for this backpack are:

- We suggest your child practice opening and closing the backpack prior to the first day of school so he/she can independently work the zippers and/or snaps.
- The backpack should be large enough to carry student work and class folder.
- Please write your child's name on the backpack.
- We discourage students bringing toys from home to school.
- Please empty your child's backpack every day.
- For children's safety, backpacks with wheels are discouraged.

## **PARENT – TEACHER COMMUNICATION**

### **Reporting to Parents**

Parent conferences are held twice a year, in the fall and spring at the school. The conference is an opportunity to report your child's progress, and for the teacher and the parents to get acquainted. The teacher and parent discuss how they can work together to enable the child to have a successful school year.

### **Communication With Teachers**

- Any notes or money from you should be pinned onto your child's clothing or placed in your child's backpack. Please ask your child's teachers about the preferred method used in her classroom.
- Please immediately advise the teacher when there is a change of address, phone number, or emergency number.
- Please advise us if there is a change (hospital, illness, death, divorce, trip, new baby, etc.) in your home. It will be kept confidential. These events do affect your child's class performance.

### **Discipline**

Our school's discipline plan is based on respect for others. Students are guided to make good choices. The teachers will communicate with you about your child's successes and areas for growth in this ongoing process.

## **The Pre-K School Plan**

Pineywoods Academy will accept applications for eligible students and tuition-based students. Pineywoods Academy offers classes for children who are four years old on or before September 1, 2009. In Texas, pre-kindergarten services are offered to families who meet the following criteria:

- The family qualifies for free/reduced lunch
- **or**
- The child meets eligibility of a second language learner
- **or**
- The family meets the criteria of "homeless"

Students who meet these criteria will attend school for ½ day. Eligible students will attend from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. Eligible students can attend all day if the parent pays for the other ½ day. The rate for the additional ½ day is \$187.50 per month for 10 months.

Students who will be tuition-based will attend school from 8:00 a.m. until 2:50 p.m. The tuition for paid students will be \$375.00 per month for 10 months.

For the school year 2009-2010, there will be one class for Pre-K. The maximum number of students will be 15 students.

**All children who are entering pre kindergarten must be toilet trained to be eligible for the program.**